

SAVANNAH ON FIRE

1820



Sleuth Edwin Willingham is hired as an arson investigator in a smoldering and dazed city - half destroyed. Forces of malice challenge him, as does the specter of a Yellow Fever epidemic. In the midst, he becomes smitten with a charming young southern lady.

HENRY C. DUGGAN, III

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Historical Fiction

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Dedicated to the memory of two great
friends and fellow outdoorsmen, Jerry
Gerst and Ken Musgrove, with whom I
shared many happy times.

Author's Note

Some of the characters in the novel are actual historical figures, as are the Mayor and Aldermen. Quite a few of the characters are fictional, so the author's apology to anyone whose name may be similar.

Nineteenth century slang and vernacular have been used on occasion to exemplify the era and the Southern culture. A few are in italics to highlight.

Several historic homes have been mentioned and it is hoped that privacy will be respected for occupants. The Scarborough House and Richardson-Owens-Thomas House are now public museums.

Effort was made to capture Savannah's early 19th century culture at all levels. Examples were the near-Victorian oversight of eligible genteel young women and the male recreational pursuits of cockfights and Gentlemen's Clubs. Covered also are the upper class socials, the outstanding architecture and the reveling of rabble - rousers at night in the riverfront pubs.

The terrifying plight of many, caused by the fire, including the loss of homes and possessions is starkly conveyed.

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Major Characters

Edwin Willingham
Susannah Jennings
Trevor Jennings-
 Susannah's brother
Mary and Thomas Jennings--
 her parents
Caleb Chisolm-river pilot
Mayor Thomas U. P. Charlton
Robert Habersham-businessman
Andrew Low-businessman
Julia Scarborough – hostess supreme
A. C. Baynard – Beaufort, S.C.
Shed Johnson --Deputy
Jamie Dale-Innkeeper
Henry McAlpin-
 Hermitage Plantation
John and Olivia Harris--immigrants

PROLOGUE

I went myself to view the Savannah River. I fixed upon a healthy situation about 10 miles from the sea. The river here forms a half moon, along the south side of which the banks are almost forty foot high and on top flat, which they call a bluff. Ships that draw twelve foot water can ride within ten yards of the bank.

General James Edward Oglethorpe
Colony founder
1733

PREFACE

1/13/1820

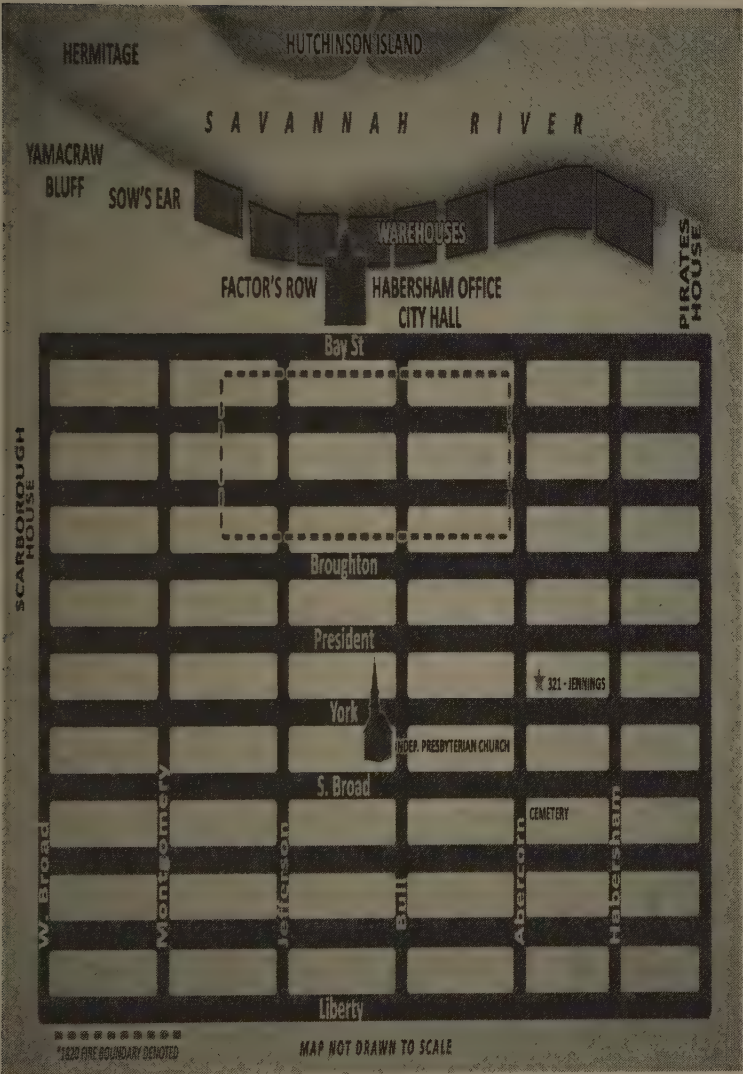
THE AUGUSTA CHRONICLE AND GEORGIA ADVERTISER

Savannah Faces One Of The Darkest Periods Of Her History

Sometime after one o'clock in the morning on January 11, 1820, a fire broke out in a livery stable behind a boardinghouse at 317 W. Bryan St. in Savannah, near Baptist Church Square*. The fire spread to Bay Street and then on to Market Square**, where illegal kegs of gunpowder were stored. There were two massive explosions, resulting in the fire spreading northeasterly through the city, fanned by strong winds. Taming by bucket brigade, volunteer firefighters and pump fire engines was unsuccessful. By the next afternoon, up to 500 buildings had been burned to the ground. Two out of three residents are now homeless and temporary tents will soon be shelter for many. Damage is estimated in the millions in this popular port city of 7,500.

Amidst winter weather, the town now lays in ashes from Bay to Broughton Street and Jefferson to Abercorn Street. Reportedly, this is the biggest city fire to date in the history of our young country. The cause of the fire has not been officially determined, though arson is suspect. A plea for help nationwide will soon go out from Mayor Charlton to help distraught Savannahians.

* now Franklin Square ** now Ellis Square



I

Fire !

Fire and gunpowder do not sleep together.

Old Proverb

"Get up, get up! We have a fire raging! Leave the house now!"

Mrs. Platt, at her boardinghouse at 317 W. Bryan St., near Baptist Church Square*, ran from room to room – pounding on each sleeping resident's door, yelling.

Breathless and trembling like a reed in the wind, she then retreated to her own room to gather a few belongings, only stopping to look through a rear window. She was taken aback by what she saw. To the rear of her lot, the fire was consuming Boone's Livery stable and could jump to her house at any time.

Wearing her housecoat, foregoing any tears, ignoring the cold night air and unaware of the time, she then ran outside in the dark. Along the street, she again began beating on doors, shouting and alerting neighbors. Back at her home, sleepy boarders stumbled outside, astonished at the fire, which was now showering down on the boardinghouse. For them, the scene produced a sense of helplessness that would soon spread across Savannah in the wake of the consuming conflagration.

* now Franklin Square

She was so thankful that her servant and her servant's husband, living in the rear quarters, had awakened her to the fire that began in the rear stable. Being dutiful, the husband, in charge of the livery, had herded the horses outside. She recalled that one neighbor she had alerted, a Mr. O'Brien, was the only one with lamps on and that answered the door fully dressed. She presumed he must have been having a sleepless night.

Suddenly, a nearby explosion shook the ground horrendously. Then another boomed, both happening in the nearby Market Square*area, where gunpowder had been stored. The fire had reached that far. Mrs. Platt, already reeling, felt as if an army was bombarding and invading Savannah as the blaze spread.

" Thomas, wake up! Wake up! " While he lay in bed sound asleep, Mayor T. U. P. Charlton was nudged and enjoined over and over by his wife, Ellen. It was the middle of the night at their home on the corner of West Broad and Broughton Streets.

"What? What is it?" he murmured.

" Someone's rapping on the front door! " said Ellen.

Climbing out of bed and lighting a candle from the still warm fireplace embers, he gazed at his gold pocket watch on the nightstand.

"It's two o'clock in the morning. Who would arouse me this time of night?" Placing on his housecoat, he voiced, " There better be a good

*now Ellis Square

reason." The pounding continued.

He slowly descended the stairs, groggy, not happy at being awakened from his sleep in the middle of the night. Opening the door, he faced Alderman Colonel Steele White, bearing a tormented look, having rushed from his home on Lincoln Street.

"The city is on fire! Hurry, come with me!"

"How bad is it?" asked the Mayor.

"Worse than you can imagine!" came the reply.

Charlton hurried back up the stairs and told his wife, "I'm going downtown, there's a big fire. Be on your watch, Ellen." He dressed, kissed her and gave a concerned look. He then proceeded down the stairs two at a time.

As they were rushing out the door, the pealing of the City Exchange Bell, announcing the fire, reached their ears. It was a hue and a cry, the piercing sound that validated the news brought by Colonel White. Heading northeast from the Mayor's home, they passed many houses with candles or lamps lit inside by residents awakened from the same sound. It was a resounding toll that would not be easily forgotten.

At the Hermitage Plantation, about three miles west of Savannah, on the river, owner Henry McAlpin was unable to sleep. He'd been thinking of the house he wanted notable Savannah architect William Jay to design. About half past two in the morning, he stepped onto his covered front porch, wearing pajamas, housecoat and nightcap. He was

about to light his pipe when he smelled the pungent odor of smoke.

Glancing eastward, he observed an unusual scene from the downtown direction. Bright orange flames and billowing smoke were lighting up the nighttime sky. He went back inside to his bedroom and shook his wife's arm to awaken her.

"There's a giant fire in the distance toward Savannah. I'm going to ride into town to see what's happening. Tell Overseer Jake to look to the workers if I'm not back at dawn." Dressing, then taking his lighted lamp, he went out to his prized stables. Choosing a select Chestnut mare, he soon saddled up and mounted.

Riding past his famed Savannah Greys brick kilns onto a sandy road, he was a short ride from town. Though feeling distressed as the darkness enveloped him, he was determined to press on. The only sounds he heard were from the horse's breathing and the clip-clop of its hooves, as they trotted along. Soon, he began to hear faint noises from town as they drew closer.

The fire rose into view and grew higher and wider the closer he came. Upon arrival on Bay Street, he was stupefied at the size of the raging fire. The acrid smoke stung his nostrils and contorted his face as he watched, wanting to do what little he could to help. He tethered his horse on the west side of town, away from the fire's path, and began to walk east.

Flames were high, pandemonium reigned, families were being driven from their homes, women were crying and babies were wailing in the

streets. There was terror on each face as they stood and watched the monster devour everything in its path. The wind blew mightily, fanning the flames. It grew as night turned to day and the normal January cold turned warm.

Buildings were collapsing, adding to the noise of screams and shouts. Smoke filled the air, bringing about coughing and burning eyes for those on the scene. For many, it seemed to be a scene of hell itself and confirmed that was not where they wanted to go after death.

Savannah had been vulnerable, with dry air due to lack of rain plus a strong northeast wind blowing at midnight. The city was laden with wooden buildings and lumberyards downtown, both ready accelerants.

Volunteer firefighter groups with horse-driven fire coaches hand-pumped water from the squares' wells and cisterns, but their efforts were useless. So were the bucket brigades organized by Constables, who were also trying to keep order. Scattered groups were attempting to wet down homes not yet consumed, but even that was futile.

All this in the midst of the inferno, engulfing houses and businesses alike. An out-of-control phenomenon. A horrific scene that continued through the night and would so well into morning.

Seeing distraught friends whose homes were burned, McAlpin offered temporary accommodations in his home for their families. Finding Mayor Charlton, he shouted above the din with a look of despair. "We need more brick homes!"

Charlton, with a rueful look, nodded and yelled back, "Yes, we do, but they are too costly for many."

McAlpin, the businessman, thought to himself, *still there will be a big demand for my bricks when rebuilding starts*. Later, remorseful feelings gripped him, thus feeling regretful for thinking in that manner in the middle of tragedy.

Firefighting continued throughout the night, but to little avail. Townspeople poured out of their homes, fearful of theirs being consumed. Many had only the clothes on their back, some, only nightclothes and a jacket. The crashing of burning buildings added to the agonizing noise of the fire's crackling. To many, the clamor seemed never ending.

At mid-day next, the blaze was gone, but a dismal smoking scene now engulfed the town. Ashes were everywhere and charred wood was all about the now vacant lots. People staggered around, hollow-eyed, with traumatized children following. Faces were streaked with grime and soot, while folks sifted for familiar remnants from what little remained at their home sites. Many articles were too hot to handle. Some of the homeless went to friends' houses that survived the fire.

Militias set up tents in the squares and the Strand* downtown on Bay Street for the homeless.

* Today's Emmet Park

The Georgia Hussars and Chatham Artillery joined forces, both led by the latter's Major Blanton Blaunket. He supervised in his usual mild – mannered and organized way, the same as he performed in his sutler* profession. Inwardly, he was distraught and felt a sickening in his stomach, but he worked to control it, knowing the necessity of what they were doing.

He told a friend, "This gives me flashbacks to the assault on Baltimore by the British in 1814, where my military unit repulsed the bombardment of Fort McHenry and the city. The skies then were red and white all night long from rockets.

My own eyes were red the next day, thinking of lost soldier friends, 150 in all. Half that many were lost by the British. It became known later that British General Robert Ross, who died in battle, was draped in a flag and immersed in a hogshead of rum in order to preserve his body for burial. One of the oddities of war."

The Major did not plan to leave for several days, to make certain all had a place to stay. He even camped in one of the tents erected by the militias, and his wife brought meals to him and some of the other militiamen.

All citizens felt an overwhelming sense of distress and looked to the town leaders for physical and emotional support.

Dr. John Posey, physician and amateur meteorologist, was heard to say, "It's as if a huge

* Military equipment provider

meteor struck from the sky in the middle of the night, bringing fire and destruction we've never seen before."

II

Ole Pyrates

All men are of one metal but not in one mold.

Andrew Low,* prosperous bachelor merchant, had watched with agony as the fire ravaged all his belongings in northwest downtown. His mercantile store, his lodgings above, his lumberyard and even his wharf at the river. Dejection and sadness seemed inadequate to describe his feelings.

Helpless, he had allowed thoughts to seep in through the night. *It was as if a nail has been driven through my back and no one could pull it out*, he thought, *all my years of hard work, gone in one night.*

Not a stranger to vicissitudes, he decided to think positive ahead. *At least safe and alive. Know that friends untouched by the fire will house me for a time. One consolation is plenty of insurance. I will begin to work on reclaiming my life tomorrow. Rebuilding will be a priority and an unburned building will be located for temporary mercantile facilities.*

I pledge to do my part to help Savannah rebuild. And when my nephew Andrew II is old enough to come from Scotland to work with me, we'll have modern facilities. Restoration will be like a seed planted, emerging into something beautiful and worthwhile.

* Uncle of Andrew Low II, whose son William married Juliet Gordon

Not far away, at the same time, two sat atop a meager cottage in the rough area of west Yamacraw Bluff. They were distanced from the fire's ravages that fateful night, two dock workers smiling. Relishing in the fire's destruction, no one was aware of them. They quaffed big draughts of rum, chuckled and slapped each other on the back. Watching the townsfolk running about and the hapless attempts by firefighters was not their concern. They meshed in with the smell of strong smoke, oblivious to its effects. They never bathed anyway. *Like hams hanging in a smokehouse, preserved with a distinct aroma.*

Sanchez boastfully opined, "Looking forward to our reward, ain't you?"

"Har, har, har, muy bien," was the scowling reply from his friend, Gonzales, plunging his fist into the air. They were dreaming of new money to come their way, lining their pockets, if only for a while. Often, they reminisced of their days as plundering pyrates when younger.

But now, they preferred a more peaceful approach to acquiring loot. They'd become like an osprey, soaring and waiting to dive for a fish near the surface. Trying to produce more with their minds rather than their bodies, they were sufficiently smug.

The huge pyrates den just to the south, in coastal Fernandina, Florida, had been a haven for these former marauders. The Amelia River provided one of the deepest harbors in Florida and was a magnet for buccaneers. As long as Spanish

gold and silver were sailing in the Gulf Stream along the coast, available for taking, they were content. It had been to them, exhilarating.

Bearded and gap-toothed, scars attested to their flair. One had been partially scalped in battle and had a black patch over one eye. The other had a long-ago huge unstitched knife cut across his face. The two scoundrels could be viewed as beastly inhabitants of the deep, ready to rise up and attack at a moment's notice.

Their garb was a varied mix of dirty linen shirts, with rips and tears, wide leather belts for holding weapons and booty, and rough-worn breeches. Weathered leather boots still served them, taken from bodies that were pillaged. Wide-brimmed tricorn hats, no longer in style, completed their *wardrobe*. As members of the Brethren of the Coast, they had fancied in the atmosphere of Fernandina lawlessness, with no military nearby, except down the coast at St. Augustine.

But President Monroe and the USA had acquired Florida from Spain in 1819 and formal occupation would take place soon in 1821. Word was out that all freebooters would be driven out. That applied even if it meant dispersing 150 skull and crossbones-adorned flags gracing the harbor. With General Andrew Jackson as Governor, that was a certainty.

The two dissipated souls had decided to embark in their sloop in advance of Jackson, to avoid confrontation. Aging was a factor for them also. In their early thirties, they were far advanced than

most pyrates, who usually never made it past their mid-twenties. They sailed north and found wharf employment in bustling Savannah. Along the way up the Savannah River, they had turned south on the Wilmington River to visit their old comrade, Jack Jennings, who housed them for a few days at his Whitemarsh Island hut. A few hundred rum toasts were made to days of old.

III

Town Council

*The strength of that flame, man had no power to astay,
As urg'd' by the worldwind, it rush'd on its prey,
And the labours of genius, and the structures of taste,
Were crumbled to ashes, in its wide spreading waste.*

poem extraction Richard Habersham
Savannah 1820

Mayor Charlton and the Alderman met three days after the fire at the City Exchange on Bay Street, with all fourteen members attending. They would have met sooner, but the smoldering remains had been too hot for a detailed damage survey. The Mayor, well-attired, with a likable manner, called the meeting to order. He thanked all for coming so that they could address the circumstances being faced. The mood of the room before him was as somber as attendees at a funeral.

He asked Rector Cranston of Christ Church, Savannah's oldest, to open the meeting with prayer for the city, the situation and the Aldermen. The Rector walked to the front, carrying his large Bible, Book of Prayer and Episcopal hymnal. He lay them down, placed on his thick lens glasses, then prayed humbly to God. Prayers were given for families of the two victims, for those who had lost homes, for those who had lost businesses and

for the leaders who will guide Savannah through the aftermath.

Charlton thanked him, then turned serious. He adjusted his glasses, cleared his throat, swallowed from his water glass, looked down at his notes on the podium and began to talk.

"Well, we know it started in a livery behind a boardinghouse on West Bryan Street. How and why it started, we don't yet know. Improperly stored gunpowder nearby created explosions, which worsened the fire, as did the wind. Losses reported so far as follows – buildings, 463; people, 2; cotton bales 25,000; numerous horses, wharves and watercraft.

Some lumberyards, as Andrew Low's, his large mercantile store and warehouse, including his quarters above, and his wharf on the river were all lost. Several waterfront Factors Row buildings' interiors have burned along with homes. So, if it was caused by arson, we have homicides committed. It's a repeat of the 1796 fire, which affected all trades for a while. This one may be worse. There was not much looting taking place, so if it was arson, looting may not have been the cause."

An Alderman asked, "What's our next step?"

The Mayor spoke, "There's only one dry goods store left, on East Broughton, but no apothecaries, jewelers, tailors, lumberyards or grocery stores opened at this time.

We will be asking other states and the Federal government for help. The militias are setting up their tents downtown for the homeless, unless

friends have taken them in. Several planters have told me they are setting up a depot downtown to provide rice, corn and beef from their plantations for those in need. Our resourceful Mary Telfair is organizing ladies to gather other supplies for our destitute in tents."

His voice choking slightly, he continued, "We know some nearby towns will be sending food, tents and supplies. We'll form a committee to distribute everything. A big cleanup is needed and each Alderman is asked to organize men in his ward. Please seek all the able-bodied you can to discard the trash and load burned timbers in horse-drawn wagons. Take everything south out beyond Liberty Street. Dump it and we'll deal with burning it later.

I know that rebuilding will come about and will at least provide jobs. Some of our property owners will have insurance that'll help. I'm certain the U.S. Senate will introduce a bill to cancel certain paid U.S. custom duties. That'll be on warehouse-stored received merchandise burned and not insured. I don't look for our state to be sending any funds from its coffers."

The Mayor then walked out from behind his podium and, in a solemn manner, made a suggestion.

"We need to consider hiring an arson investigator. Someone who could determine if the fire was caused by arson or an accident. The South Carolina Governor has recommended someone to me to whom I sent word to visit for a meeting with us. We would also need an arson committee later

to assist as needed, should we decide to hire him. He would be like a prime bird dog, as you hunters know, that could sniff out the fire's remnants, leading to the villains, if any, that started it."

Pausing, he glanced over the room. "Any comments?"

Several mentioned pumping from wells and cisterns in the squares, volunteer firefighters and bucket brigades had been to no avail. They expressed discouragement along with strong comments by a few. Alderman Col. Steele White, a War of 1812 veteran, with a serious look, arose.

Expressing himself with waving arms, voiced, "It looks like our rule of imposing a fine unless each house has five buckets and a ladder were of no help either."

Alderman James Morrison then stood and in an aggrieved manner, asked, "Who's to blame for the now-exploded gunpowder being illegally stored downtown?"

The Mayor responded, abjectly, "One of our militias. It was supposed to be there temporarily."

Morrison then commented, "They need to be held accountable, in some form, whether it be monetary or otherwise, due to the damages." He owned a much admired carriage and coach-making business and was known to be forthright.

Col. Steele White rose and spoke again, not impassively. "I know we have city Night Watchmen on rotation. Even that may not be effective. In my opinion, we have not been prepared. A committee is needed to help

determine what protections can be brought about for the future. We need to revamp somehow."

He continued to speak at length, as if a geyser had just erupted and all the frustrations of many came forth at once. The comments heard were collective, though many were still too stunned to speak.

Another suggestion made was to require men be posted nightly at every street corner. Alderman Morrison again stood and responded.

"Humbug! Have you lost your cotton pickin' mind? We don't have enough men for that!" Morrison was blackened from head to toe, as he'd just left helping to move charred timber. Any other time it would have been comical, but in this case it brought emphasis to what was being discussed.

Isaiah Davenport, builder, stood next and calmly articulated, "Going back to the investigation subject, I recommend we hire an arson investigator, possibly the one coming to visit. If we are satisfied with him, we would have someone to come in clearheaded. We have plenty to do already. If a crime has been committed, a criminal would need punishment." With a few words, he was convincing. Many agreed with his positive suggestions.

Levi S. Delyon, the affable attorney, never at a loss for words, stood. With a hint of a smile, said, "The city may also need a fire department staffed with trained fire fighters, not just volunteers. One that can readily mobilize forces, to go beyond what we have now. We, of course, would have to

see to their funding in our budget. I also suggest a committee for this purpose that would report to us once we have cleaned up the town."

Usually loquacious, today he limited his comments. Of course, he may have realized he wasn't in a court of law. One Alderman was heard whispering to another-"*on this day he's not a bagpipe.*"

The Aldermen then yielded the floor and the Mayor's closing comments came about.

"I know we have fire hysteria, that fear prevails and many are traumatized. Many theories abound as to the cause of the fire, so that's why we may need an arson investigator. A very large sinkhole has opened up in our lives, but it will be refilled and surmounted with good structures again. We'll rise above the challenges and rebuild Savannah. Our people have spirit and determination."

Smiling, he said, "Thank you for all your suggestions. We'll follow up each and every one. Next meeting will be very soon to interview the investigator. Forthwith, let's start the cleanup and we'll have a subsequent meeting in a few weeks for Alderman reports."

IV

Investigator

*As the strong man exults in his physical ability, so glories
the analyst in that moral activity which disentangles.*

Edgar Allen Poe

Edwin Willingham left his rented room from the large house on Bay Street in Beaufort, South Carolina. It was January fourteenth at eight o'clock in the morning. He walked briskly to the wharves area downtown on the Beaufort River to become a passenger on a sloop headed to Savannah. He was fortunate for the availability, as he'd just received a message rushed to him the previous day from Mayor Charlton of Savannah.

The news had already spread of the fire that had consumed much of Savannah. The Town Council was to meet in two days on January sixteenth and the Mayor requested his coming for an interview as a candidate for arson investigator.

He climbed aboard along with several other passengers and sailing soon got underway. It began with embarkation on the river from town, going east. Then it would turn south, crossing the Broad River mouth to enter Calibogue Sound, along Hilton Head Island's west side. This allowed them to avoid sailing on the Atlantic Ocean.

Relaxing on deck, he began to think how pleased he was with the multitude of his arson

investigations so far. Sending out letters to the Mayors of Charleston; Savannah; Columbia, South Carolina; Wilmington, North Carolina and other major cities in the South had borne fruit. He also ran a weekly ad in the Charleston and Beaufort newspapers.

One of his fellow passengers, introduced as Ralph, struck up a conversation.

"I'm just passing through, hoping to wind up in Key West to join a friend in the salvage business. I'm told that the United States will soon acquire it from Spain." Eager to converse, he then changed the subject.

"Do you know much about Beaufort?" he inquired. "If so, I'm all ears."

Edwin responded, "Of course. It's as close as any to being my hometown, though I grew up on a nearby plantation. It's the second oldest town in South Carolina, going back about a hundred years. It's on Port Royal Island, one of about sixty-five in the area. Cotton is the big export here from many area plantations and quite a few have prospered, as you can see from the mansions in town. I'm headed to Savannah for potential temporary employment, but I always look forward to returning."

Their first and only stop was for a pleasant night at a plantation owner's cottage on Hilton Head. It was sparsely furnished but clean and roomy enough. The meals were enjoyable, provided by the owner's hands. The boat left the next morning, continuing south to Savannah.

Anticipating a new fire investigative assignment, Edwin felt stimulated when they turned west and entered the Savannah River to ascend 15 miles to town. The Captain claimed to know the routes, so no river pilot was needed. With the sun shining, not a cloud above, coupled with the sweeping marshes alongside, he felt sublime. He dreamed as if he were on a holiday, soon to reach a castle in the sky.

The last of the savannas along the river's west side eventually ended and the well-known town bluff rose up on the left. It showed Edwin why founder General Oglethorpe didn't stop till he reached it. His first surprise soon came from the strong aroma of smoke, lingering from the great fire. He then beheld a grand scene.

A multitude of ships' masts swayed, their bowsprits hovering over the wharves, which displayed retail booths, coiled lines, casks and empty carts. Several steamships, favored by travelers of means, were harbored adjacent. Stone and brick cotton warehouses rose prominently 4 to 5 stories fronting the high bluff back from the waterfront. A couple of shipwright operations, with boats in various stages of construction, operated on the harbor's east end.

Shouting orders to the crew, the staunch Captain pulled into the dock, tied up and advised it was safe to debark. He stood at the front, smiling as if he had just won a naval battle.

Edwin could sense a bustling atmosphere in normal times. This day, January fifteenth, however, few people were present, as waterfront

laborers were involved in helping townsfolk clean up from the fire. Thanking the Captain, the twenty-three year old tall, dark and lean Willingham picked up his baggage and climbed onto the wharf.

He next asked a nearby river pilot for directions to the mayor's office. The pilot, who said his name was Caleb Chisolm, gave directions and mentioned that if he could be of further help, to let him know. Edwin noticed that he was muscular, with a well-set jaw, black hair and somewhat tanned skin. He carried a large knife holstered on his belt. *I may need him later*, he thought.

Ambling up the ballast stones access walk towards the Mayor's office, he was startled by the charred remains of buildings upon reaching Bay Street.

He thought, *it's heartbreaking to see what the fire has done to this active and beautiful town. Even the trees have been scorched and burned. More hurtful are the sad looks of those whose homes have been destroyed and who now are living in tents along Bay Street. I feel sorrow for them, as if they're refugees from a war zone.*

Benevolent plantation owners had their workers set up stands so to provide food from their fields to those in need. The fire had not reached the area plantations. Other local workers, in soot-covered clothes, could be seen hauling away charred timbers in carts and wagons. Edwin perceived it must have felt like endless labor.

Admitted into the Mayor's office, he observed the high ceiling, floor-length windows and

spaciousness. It was accommodated by a large desk, ample visitor chairs and a coffee pot. A few paintings adorned the walls, notably that of George Washington. Mayor Charlton rose and greeted Edwin cheerfully, but it became plain that he was under a post-fire strain.

"I trust that you had a safe and enjoyable sail to our burned but still beautiful town."

"I did, and I look forward to the visit and of learning more about it," responded Edwin.

"I believe we need an experienced investigator for what we've been through here," said the Mayor. "Many of us think the fire is the work of an arsonist and we'd like you to share your credentials at tomorrow's meeting with the Town Council. They are a responsive and responsible group and I think you'll be pleased. Now, I insist that you stay at my home the first night. My hospitable wife, Emily, is expecting you." Edwin accepted with politeness.

Leaving the Mayor's office, he decided to stroll up and down Bay Street, the initial east-west thoroughfare in town. Soon he beheld Bull Street, wide and sandy, leading straight south one block to Johnson Square. It was positioned as a leading Savannah fixture, the largest and oldest square. Wandering around, he went west through much devastation, stopping on North Jefferson Street. It appeared to be the western boundary of the fire with rubble strewn everywhere.

House after house, tenements and shops were all gone. The sounds of axes tearing down leftover

walls were ceaseless. It was as if lumberjacks abounded everywhere, cutting timber in the forest to be floated downstream.

'Tis a sorrowful sight, he considered, though ironical, as some of the shacks probably needed to be replaced. I imagine, for older residents, it has recalled memories of post-bombarded Savannah in 1779. The French and Americans were unsuccessful in retaking the city from the British during the Revolution. Were I established here, it would be an opportunity to build row house, for a good investment but also to help the city. Of course, the fire of 1796 was dreadful also.

Next, he headed to the Mayor's home at Broughton and West Broad Streets, where he discovered an exclusive neighborhood, untouched. It was a shining light, adjacent a darkened area and it lifted his spirits.

That evening, Mrs. Charlton, a very pleasant lady, served great fare and the conversation was lively, which all enjoyed. She was pleased to tell him that she was also originally from the Santee River plantation area in South Carolina, after he mentioned his birth there.

The Mayor loved to express of Savannah's goings-on. His opportunity came when Edwin wanted to know more about the city and its history.

"Savannah, like many American coastal cities, began to see an increase in immigrations after the War of 1812. It's received quite a few prosperous

English and Irish Protestants and an abundance of Catholics and it's been tolerant of all. The wealthy are able to go into business or purchase land tracts for a plantation. We are also fortunate to have many skilled artisans that immigrate, along with tailors, butchers, cobblers, carpenters, bakers, and of course, laborers."

He continued, bearing enthusiasm. "Work opportunities have abounded in early 1800's Savannah. Cotton has been the big boon here. Dublin is an active emigrant port from Ireland as is Liverpool from England. The industry of shipping passengers has become quite lucrative for some. Unless one can afford a cabin on a packet ship, families are assigned to steerage, with cramped quarters for six weeks on the ocean. It's quite the challenge, but they are so proud to arrive here. I'm certain you can relate to ocean voyaging, having done it."

"Yes," said Edwin, "and going abroad helps one remember how good ole America is as the *promised land*."

Soon, after dinner, with gratitude expressed to Mrs. Charlton, he asked to be excused due to the long day.

"Sorry to be retiring so early, but my fatigue makes me feel like a cannon ball about to be dropped through the floor," he said with a grin.

Just after nightfall, before dozing off, he could hear the Exchange Bell ringing its curfew so that sailors would be reminded to leave the streets till morning. It reminded him even more that he was in a port city.

The next morning, Edwin did his best to dress in appropriate attire for his meeting. With top hat, suit, tie, long coat and polished pointed-toe leather shoes, he felt confident. Standing 5'11" and trim in front of the bedroom's giltwood pier mirror, he was satisfied with his clean-shaven reflection.

Next, he walked over to the mahogany writing desk and pulled over a chair. He located a sheet of ecru vellum in his valise and reached for the silver dip pen beside the ink well. Dipping the pen, he proceeded to write a note of thanks to Mrs. Charlton for her hospitality. Placing the note in a sealed envelope addressed to his hostess, he placed it on the desk.

Descending the stairs, he met Mrs. Charlton and politely declined breakfast but did accept a cup of coffee. He was anxious to soon walk downtown with the Mayor.

Afterwards, taking his baggage and expressing appreciation to Mrs. Charlton, he set out with the Mayor to the City Exchange. Early morning and clean-up crews were already laboring.

Looking forward to addressing the Town Council. Thankful for my two years at Cambridge University as a member of the Literary and Speech Club. It enlivened my brain with classic literature and tutored me in public speaking. Increasingly, it honed my skill. Edwin mentally gathered his thoughts for the meeting.

As he entered the meeting, the Aldermen were chatting with *long tongues like bell klappers*, but they quieted as he and the Mayor entered the

room. He could feel all eyes turning on him, as if he were an actor on stage. Some nodded in a sociable manner and he responded likewise. After the Mayor called the session to order, he reminded them of the agenda and introduced Edwin. He reiterated that their neighbor, South Carolina Governor Bennett, had provided his good recommendation.

Seegar smoke pervaded the room, along with whiffs of fresh coffee, as Edwin arose and took the floor, smiling and confident.

"Greetings, gentlemen. Thank you so much for the invitation," he declared. Pausing first, he spoke, "I was born in 1797 on a plantation near Santee, South Carolina. My father was an immigrant that arrived years earlier at Sullivan's Island, near Charleston, but died in 1798 at Santee. I was a toddler at the time and shortly after he died, my brother was born and named for my father, Thomas Henry Willingham.

"My mother remarried Mr. Elais Jaudon of Beaufort District, and we moved to his plantation near the Savannah River. So I now have 9 Jaudon stepbrothers and sisters. My mother still controls the Santee plantation. I enrolled in Cambridge University in 1815 at age eighteen, after the War of 1812 treaty. My mother advanced that my father wanted me to attend there as he did. Though not a required Church of England member, I was allowed to attend, as my Lincolnshire Anglican family assisted. That rule will probably soon be abolished.

"I stayed at college only two years along with having a part-time night constable job. It gave me the ability to arrest with a warrant. Moving to London in 1817, I joined the Bow Street Runners, a special unit of the Home Department, the official police force for the salaried night patrol. My English family, though reluctant, helped me attain that job as a police apprentice." He smiled broadly and continued to face the group all around the room.

" We policed the Rookery areas of London, heavy with slums, poverty and crime. Soon the Runners likely will come under Mr. Peeler's Metropolitan Police force at Whitehall Palace, which is adjacent to Scotland courtyard in Westminster.

I learned arson investigation from a single officer, who years ago investigated the large Ratcliffe Fire in 1794, at the time the largest to take place in 18th century England. It claimed over 400 homes and left 1400 homeless, the numbers being comparable to your recent fire."

He then took a short breather, gathering his words.

" I always carry a double-barreled Derringer and I own a Flintlock Revolving pistol, or barker. I learned how to defend myself while at Cambridge from an attending Siamese prince, a student who is a skilled fighter. In 1818, I returned home to become an independent arson investigator in the southeast, out of Beaufort. I've been fortunate in handling twelve arson cases since."

With the mayor's suggestion, he next proceeded to discuss investigations.

"The first step is to determine if the fire was from accident or arson. I would have to question many and study the origin location. An accidental fire can be caused by the misuse of candles, lamps, the fireplace or a brush fire. Arson, of course, has various causes. It can be because of someone's instability of mind, for their own fractured enjoyment, to defraud insurance companies or create a distraction so to allow looting. It could be set by kids for the thrill. If they're caught, it creates quite a task for deciding punishment.

A jilted lover may set fire to his girlfriend's home, a vagrant may set fire so to be caught and find shelter in prison, or it could be a murder motive. If the actual fire starter is paid by a bankrolled perpetrator, then two parties have to be sought. We have to be prepared, as sometimes the investigation will lead to a guilty perpetrator known to many of you, even a well-known businessman." He then noticed angst expressed on the faces of a few.

"There are places in this world, Ireland as an example, with many destitute people. Arson fires are set by the masses, as protests over economic conditions and persecutions. I doubt that's the case in Savannah, but we try to consider everything. The main thing I was taught by the London arson investigator was to always be observant."

Stretching his arms out with his palms up, he asked, "Any questions?"

Attorney Levi S. DeLyon asked in a congenial manner, "What's been your success rate?"

Edwin replied, "We can always determine if it's an accident or arson. As far as arson, about three out of four times we are able to seek out the fire starter and a bankrolled perpetrator, if there is one. Whoever is the investigator must have compelling evidence, with no hollow conjecture, especially if lives are lost."

At the Mayor's cue, Edwin thanked all and excused himself to the adjacent hall. They would have discussion and then vote.

One of the Aldermen allowed, after Edwin left, "I like him. He definitely has *guts in his brain*."

The Council did approve unanimously based on Isaiah Davenport's newly given motion, seconded by Colonel White. They agreed that the Mayor hire him as a temporary Arson Investigator. Later, he met with the Mayor and signed a contract, which provided for four months room and board, plus a stipend of fifty dollars a month. It also allowed reimbursement for reasonable livery as needed.

A \$350 bonus would be awarded if arson criminals were found and arrested with ample proof. He was sworn in as a Deputy Constable with arrest authority and would report to the Mayor but seek assistance from the Sheriff as needed. With that completed, Edwin set his mind to a zealous course of action that would lead to a conclusion. He would approach the job with enthusiasm and boldness.

V

Accident or Arson

*The fire you kindle for your enemy often burns
yourself more than them.*

Chinese proverb

Edwin entered White's Merchants Inn, greeted by Jamie Dale, the manager, who sported a smile a mild wide. He was welcomed and asked if he needed a room. He also inquired from whence Edwin came and was told Beaufort and that he was here on a mission. The Inn was rustic, but well-maintained and tastefully decorated. *Looks good to me*, thought Edwin.

Dale took his bag, escorted him upstairs to a room and said, "Register after you've settled in and come back downstairs."

Later, comforted that Dale was so hospitable, Edwin told him he'd enjoyed Savannah so far, even though it was in the midst of rebounding from the fire.

" Yes, it's been a dreadful sorrow for many," lamented Dale. " It came in rather quick like a giant tidal wave, bringing destruction. Now, it's gone, but the results lay all around to remind us. "

Since the investigation would occupy his mind for the next several months, he decided to take advantage of every circumstance to question those he met.

"Do you recall the weather on the night of the fire?" He posed to Dale.

"I'm not always aware of things like that, but I remember that evening before I went to bed. First of all, it had been very dry, with little rain the previous month. The wind was blowing hard from the southwest to the northwest, which I believe is why the fire moved in that direction. The wind, I'm certain, fanned it."

"That would have been fortunate for an arsonist, if one was involved," spoke Edwin. "Ruinous for the city, of course. Much obliged for your comments."

Later, noticing that a quill pen, ink and paper was provided on a small desk in his room, he deemed it timely to prepare a list. Meticulously, he made note of steps for his investigation, beginning with those he needed to question, along with the items on which to focus at the fire start site.

Next, it was time to walk the area of fire destruction, just to observe. That's the main thing he was taught. Observe. He started in the extreme northeast corner of town on Bay Street and walked west. Then, turning south onto Habersham, he came to Warren Square. There he beheld one of Savannah's magnificent late 18th century Federal-style homes. A passer-by said it was the Mongin-Carswell home. He thought, *two-story, perfect symmetry, small porch, accessed by matching steps on each side, clapboard siding, multi-paned windows and headlight over the doorway*. His love of architecture had diverted him. *I must move on.*

Turning west on East Congress Street, he came to Abercorn Street, one of the main north-south avenues. It was the obvious eastern boundary of the fire, where it had finally burned out. The view west, north and south was depressing.

Addressing a soot-covered worker loading charred wood on a cart, he asked, "How long have you been doing this?"

The man looked at him with doleful eyes and responded, "Since two days after the fire. It was my home. We lost everything." Edwin grieved for him.

"Can I acquire a cup of coffee for you, so you can take a break?"

"Yes, I'd appreciate it. They have coffee on Bay Street, at a temporary stand."

Edwin went and returned with two cups, handing one to a Mr. Carlton, as they had exchanged names. He seemed to brighten with each sip. Edwin was glad.

Carlton said, "Soon as I finish up, I need to return to work at the shipyard. Fortunately, it can still function. Staying with my in-laws, but got to feed my family."

He smiled, thanking Edwin, who took his leave to continue walking.

My heart stays with him, he thought. The scene was repeated many times as he continued west, eventually reaching Jefferson Street, the fire's approximate west boundary.

The next morning, after a sound sleep, he headed downstairs, with the smell of sizzling

bacon presenting itself. Greeting Dale and seating, he was presented with a well-prepared breakfast, including Souchong, his favorite black tea from China. He peppered his eggs and grits considerably, his usual custom, which caused him to sneeze.

Dale rushed over to say, "God bless you!" a common tradition.

"Who can I employ to wash my clothes ?" he asked Dale. "I have a river washwoman that drops by every week on Mondays. Leave them in a sack in the back hall next to mine. Her fee is reasonable. Plus, if ironing is needed, she'll heat up her iron for an additional small fee. She's reliable."

Soon well-satiated with his meal, his mind was becoming clear and ready for work. His number one goal would be to prove whether the fire was from an accident or arson. He planned many inquiries over the coming days. Discovering the location of the fire's origin at Boone's Livery Stable, he first set off in that direction.

The livery had been at the rear of Mrs. Platt's boardinghouse at the corner of West Bryan and Montgomery Streets, in northwest Savannah.

He planned to question fire bystanders, volunteer firefighter Captains, a few Aldermen, Mrs. Platt's neighbors and boarders, but first herself. She was congenial though clearly still traumatized.

"I was scared to death !" she exclaimed, placing her hands over her mouth. "I delayed tears till I could alert my boarders and neighbors on that

fateful night," quivering as she talked. "Someone must have set that fire, it couldn't have just started on its own. I hope you find them." He thanked her, seeing her look of grief as he left.

He also made a point to chat with Mr. Boone, owner of the livery stable, plus the nightly area lamplighter. Nothing of interest surfaced. Thinking a valuable contact would be the livery attendant, who had lived to the rear of Mrs. Platt's house with his wife, Mrs. Platt's servant, he sought him out. He'd heard of the attendant moving the horses outside after discovering the fire.

"I heared their neighing that night and was sho glad I got'em out in time," wide-eyed as he spoke to Edwin. But nothing pertinent was forthcoming in their conversation.

Edwin next sifted through the livery's fire root site while wearing gloves, boots and face handkerchief, in case of lingering noxious fumes of any kind. Scrutinizing all possible details, looking for telltale signs, he believed in the quote, *the evidence is in the ashes*. Thoroughness was his watchword.

Searches were made for a tinderbox, discarded steel and flint fire starter, stray hairs and fibers. Scorch-marked V shapes on any remaining walls were sought, thereby be-telling an origin. He also looked for accelerants, leftover charred coal, unique liquid bottles and partially burned paper, furniture or clothing. Any lock-forced entry tools were not found.

Often seems as if spinning one's wheels in futile

searches, but persistence has always led me to find a clue. After about thirty minutes, one special item caught his eye. It was a burned-over rum bottle, the brand obliterated. He figured that was his best manifest so far, stashing it in the small canvas bag slung over his shoulder.

Next stop was the Sow's Ear pub on the waterfront, which he understood to be where many revelers gathered at night. Visiting in the daytime, he entered a darkened low-ceilinged large room with stone walls and brick floors. The odors of spilled rum and ale on the floor were apparent from the previous evening's carousers. He forced himself, somehow, not to vomit. It made him think of a cave, where anthropoids surely lived. He found the barkeep mopping the floor. Introducing himself and his mission, he displayed the rum bottle.

"Could it be from here and can you tell whom the buyer might have been?"

Stone-faced, craggy-looking, an earring in one ear, with long black hair, he was hesitant to reply.

Probably thinking I'm the law come to chastise him for some foul activities, thought Edwin. The bartender was slow, but did reply that the bottle was from the Sow's Ear, although there was no way he could tell who purchased it. He did comment further.

"It's a cheap Caribbean grog of rum and water, but with a high alcohol content. 'Tis the drink of choice for sailors, smugglers, and rabble-rousers."

Edwin knew it would have emboldened the arsonists. Thanking the barkeep, handing him a coin, then leaving, he focused on his next stop.

He sought out the livery attendant again, now staying nearby in a small unpainted cottage in the west Yamacraw Bluff area.

The attendant voiced, "No one drinks rum from bottles at the stable. But there was never a lock on the door either."

Edwin asked of the smoke color emanating from the fire and was told it was white. He knew then that it came from hay, which would have been stored for the horses. It could also have been used as an accelerant for the fire, he surmised. A few pieces of the puzzle were coming forth, as if tatters left on a trail to be followed.

That evening, back at the inn, Edwin conversed with the manager, Jamie Dale, in the large lobby area, after the evening meal. They pulled up cane chairs to the fireplace, with Dale becoming introspective.

He opened. "Everyone tells me that there was no looting during or after the fire, which is interesting."

Edwin countered, "Well, that is quite interesting, because if it was arson, it would have been for some reason other than looting. It most likely was arson, because the livery attendant said there was no logical reason for an accident in the stable in the middle of the night."

Dale commented, "I know the young livery attendant and I can vouch for his character and

capability. I think you can trust everything he's told you." With a look of confidence, he added, "I feel certain in saying I believe you're going to find the arsonist."

Edwin responded, as he smiled, while reaching to shake his hand, "I appreciate your thoughts. I'll take all the encouragement I can get."

The next day, on the Mayor's recommendation, he went to see Sheriff Isaac D'Lyon at his office. He was a big man, appeared to be in his fifties with a face quite furrowed, which may have come from years of dealing with criminals. Edwin introduced himself and the Sheriff welcomed him.

He smiled, extended a huge hand to shake and motioned for Edwin to be seated. The office was quite austere but appeared functional for the type business conducted. Pistols, muskets and ammunition were stowed in the corner. A large spittoon sat on the floor next to his desk.

His office was located at the corner of Abercorn and Charlton Street. The gaol, or large jail, was south, beyond Liberty Street in an undeveloped area next to the old palisades protective walls. The gaoler was responsible to the elected Sheriff.

"How can I help you?" he said.

Edwin fired away, "Have there been any recent series of fires before the one on January 11?"

The Sheriff responded, "No, that has not been a problem."

The next question was, "Have you ever had to deal with arsonists?"

"Years ago we had a coupla small-time ones. They didn't amount to much. We deal a lot with drunken sailors and locals from the waterfront who wind up in the gaol overnight or placed in stocks out front of my office. Sometimes, we have burglaries or street fights. On rare occasion, our gaol will have a prisoner awaiting imminent hanging, from sentencing. We act as law enforcement, court bailiff, serve dispossession notices and attend to the gallows. Any long term imprisonment has the prisoner sent to the state prison in Milledgeville. We have few felonies taking place."

He noticed that the Sheriff had a terrible cough and also was bringing up phlegm to go into his handkerchief. This was all between spitting chewing tobacco juice into a nearby spittoon, sometimes missing.

"Have you had a doc check on your cough ?"

"Well, I thought it was from breathing wood dust in my shop. I build and sell furniture on my off time. But the doc says I may have Consumption*, which ain't good. He wants me back soon to check it out. It may be I've arrested too many drunken sailors from around the world," he said, grinning. Feeling somewhat uncomfortable, Edwin thanked him for his time and advised he'd be seeing him again soon. He'd heard that one of the Sheriff's notable duties was to escort the Judge to the courthouse on court dates. The Sheriff would always wear a special ceremonial hat and long sheathed blade at his side.

*Tuberculosis

Stepping outside, he met the Sheriff's Deputy, Shed Johnson.

"How do, Mr. Willum. I'm Shed."

"Good to meet you, Shed. By the way, my name is actually Willingham."

"Heard 'bout you. Is you gonna find them firebugs?"

"Well, right now I'm just starting to look into it."

"You know, I betcha their kind stay round the waterfront. Maybe even old pyrates from Floridy."

"So, we have pyrates here now?" asked Edwin.

"Yeah, ex-ones, and you can tell'm right off. Scar-faced, gap-toothed, fingers missing from knife fights, soiled clothes, crude. And lookin' to make cheese from whatever comes along. They're greasy, grimmy-skinned and seldom see soap. Lot of 'em work on the whavves till op-tunitees come 'long, legal or not."

Shed said he was from Bulloch County, nearby, but didn't want to be a farmer like his folks. So he came to Savannah and became a deputy. At that, Edwin, ready to move on, thanked him for the advice and mentioned he was certain he'd chat with him again.

Thinking, as he walked away, *what have I stepped into here ? A Sheriff that might have a terrible malady, plus a somewhat nonsensical Deputy. I know the importance of talking to many during an investigation, even some who seem zany. The bottom fact and irony of it is, sometimes the peculiar ones know more than what appears*

on the surface. Not certain whether to run when I see Shed, or to listen.

What came to mind next as he left was a vision of half-clad hut dwellers, living on an island in Georgia's vast Okefenokee Swamp, southwest of Savannah. *Nah*, he thought, *these guys can't be that barbaric.*

Edwin's next visit was to the office of Robert Habersham on Factors Row close by the river, again on the Mayor's recommendation. He was a well-known successful businessman, owner of a large cotton factorage firm* at 610 W. Bay Street and was also a merchant and planter.

He rose and greeted Edwin, "I heard you'd be with us for awhile, investigating the fire, so it's good to see you. Pardon me if I seemed tired, my good doctor said I had a recent infection of the Pancreas, whatever that is. It kept me from my daily exercise. By the way, my first wife, Mary, now deceased, was from Beaufort District also, like you." Edwin recorded for himself, *he smiles and is gentlemanly.*

Habersham offered a cigar, as he lit one from a small stick from the fireplace, but Edwin politely declined. He noticed the fashionable leather tobacco pouch on his belt, commonplace among the businessmen. It seemed to blend with the furnishings, much leather and brass.

"Just wanted to see if you could help me out a little."

Habersham replied, "Do my best."

*cotton factors, major players in the trade, represent planters as agents in warehousing and sales on the international market

Edwin's first inquiry began, "Are there any cotton factors or others you know who have excess debt, looming losses, are being blackmailed, have heavy gambling debts or enemies?" He added, "I'm searching for a motive of arson for insurance purposes."

"Yes, certainly. The Mayor tipped me that you'd have some questions. Speaking, businesswise, we are in the midst of the Panic of 1819, which is how the press terms it. We're experiencing a drop in demand for goods and services since Europeans are no longer at war and are now producing some of their own needs. So, we've had excess production and are now facing more unemployment in the country."

Edwin thinks, *he's articulate and knowledgeable.*

"Worldwide cotton prices have dropped by one-half. This creates problems for area cotton planters and factors that have invested capital or have bank loans, causing an uptick in foreclosures. Plus, Liverpool, one of our biggest markets, is now buying lower priced cotton from India. There is no doubt that some mentioned are tottering."

He continued, "as far as blackmail, gambler's debts, and personal enemies, I'll have to think on it and inquire. I'll let you know if I hear anything pertinent."

Edwin asked, "What percentage of the properties burned were insured?"

"Hmmm...." was his response, as he looked at the ceiling, thinking. "I'm not certain, maybe two-thirds, it could be less. The wealthy landlords

usually insure. Not every homeowner can afford it and some are afraid of insurance companies being undercapitalized and unable to pay claims. Some insurance companies won't insure if they think the risk is too high. Most of the insurers are out of Charleston or England, as many northern American companies won't insure in the south."

Habersham resumed, in measured tones, in a pleasant manner. "An example of many affluent men today, William Bulloch, has diverse business interests, realized through investing inherited wealth. He commissioned his new home for design and construction to William Jay in 1818.

At the time he was drawing income from investments and also serving as President of the State Bank of Georgia. Like many, he lost much of his fortune last year in the depressed market and in the fire this year. He will probably have to sell his beautiful new home to cover debts. But he's not the type person to have the fire set for insurance purposes."

He did give Edwin several possible suspects that could be investigated, in a surreptitious manner, provided his name was left out of any future discussions.

Edwin thanked him generously for his comments and his time and took his leave.

VI

Daufuskie Island

*A wise man in the storm prays to God not for
safety from danger, but for deliverance from fear.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

The 1754 Seamans Inn and Tavern*, in the NE corner of town, was situated a scant distance from the river. It was another rendezvous of pirates and sailors from the Seven Seas. Here, seamen drank their fiery grog and discoursed, sailor fashion, on their adventures from Singapore to Shanghai and from San Francisco to Port Said. Even with a seedy reputation, ship captains and mates would visit, but they would maintain a sense of decorum.

In order to develop a feel for where another group of the seagoing element gathered, Edwin visited one evening. He ordered a mug of grog at the bar, then took it to nurse at a small table, seating himself in a Windsor chair. Patrons were talking all around him, reflecting sensible behavior. Glancing around, his goal was to remain inconspicuous, especially since there were a few unsavory characters in the room.

Suddenly, he had the explosive sensation of being conked on the head. With no sense of time, he had an awareness of being dragged through a cave or a tunnel leading down in the direction of the river. He was groggy and his head ached, the blow having been struck from behind.

*now Pirate's House Restaurant

Blindfolded, he was treated roughly and soon placed on the bottom of a small boat at riverside. He remembered being at a table in the Inn, but then realized he was being kidnapped.

With hazy thoughts, he pictured his circumstances. *A small sloop, maybe 25 feet, small sails, sloppy deck, a dirty spot. The abductors conversed in Spanish-accented English voices. They also spoke in Spanish. One is a bull calf, fumbling over everything, much to the other's dismay. The second man smoked cheap seegars, based on the aroma. They were scarce and usually of Spanish origin.*

Lying in the sloop and bound up, he continued his muddled thoughts trying to determine what led to this situation. *Was I being stolen away to serve on a ship far across the sea? I've heard of such. Is it the arsonists that don't want me to investigate further?* His senses were so debilitated from the blow, it was difficult. He was bound, stretched out in the bottom of the boat all night, with only a blanket thrown over him. He dozed a little, waiting till dawn, head pounding.

At first light they began to sail, he knew not where, and he was given no sustenance nor water. Though blindfolded, he could ascertain, *they seemed to be headed east, downstream on the river and toward the ocean. Of course, they may have other ideas. They talked again in Spanish-accented English, recounting wild tales, sounding like bona fide pyrates.*

One spoke that if a sailor steals from another and is caught, he is marooned on a deserted island.

Left alone with a bit of food, a small bottle of water and a pistol, with one minnie ball or bullet. *My guess for suicide.* Their raucous laughter ensued.

The other spewed, "The worst treatment is if one is caught stealing a horse. He's imprisoned in a cage with it and must eat the horse to be set free." More howling.

Edwin thought, *Have they broken out the rum already?* The seegar smoker, between coughs and spitting, contributed the next horrific tale.

"If a pyrate is caught stealing from the storeroom, he could be nailed to the deck, blindfolded, guns fired behind his head or he's simply roasted over slow fires. He's then thrown into the sea and pulled in just before drowning." Nonstop guffaws continued.

Edwin felt as if he was living a scene from some farfetched novel, wherein the hero is eventually set adrift, alone, in a dinghy, with little hope. His mind continued to conjure various outcomes, all terrifying. He decided to speak.

"Could you please tell me what's going on. Where are you taking me?"

A brief response was all he received.

"Mi amigo, we're taking you where the wind blows warmly, the fruit hangs on trees, and the señoritas are at your command."

They laughed heartily at that.

Otherwise, unless his captors talked, the only sounds were the wind and the seagulls. One finally spoke up to the other.

"Should we feed el hombre, in case he's going to Fiddlers Green*?" That brought forth a few chuckles.

What is that ? He fearfully wondered.

Willingham's ruminations persisted. *What diabolic scheme are they concocting ? Is the end near? I can feel the blood tingling in all my veins. Lying here, blindfolded, in the dark, it seems as if I have fallen into an abyss. If only I were unbound, with no blindfold, I would have a chance to fight. What awaits me? Dear Lord, please give me strength, courage and an absence of fear.*

The early morning fog had come upon the water and it made him shiver. Hours later, as they continued to sail, the outside air warmed as the sun rose higher. Body warmth slowly returned to him.

After a period of interminable silence, one of the rascals spoke to the other.

"Hard tiller right, so we don't miss the turn."

"Si, amigo," said the other.

Edwin could feel the boat leaning to the left side, as they turned, then settled in a stable position. Sailing continued, but he had no sense of time or place.

When at last the sails were furled, he realized they were coming to a stop. Edwin tried to listen to them conferring in low tones, presuming something new was about. He had the impression that they were now next to a small beach area. Across the water on the other side he presumed must be marshes.

*pyrates lingo-Heaven

Speculation on what might happen to him loomed, and his mind began to race. *Do they plan to decapitate me and leave my remains on the beach? Stake me out at low water so high tide can drown me? Some torture in mind? Or will they just shoot me point blank and get it over with?* His anxiety level was high. He tried to picture a last-minute escape, but nothing came to him. He felt utter helplessness.

Without warning, they ripped open his shirt and said, "Gringo, this knife may sting a little, but it won't kill you. An x across your chest will serve as a reminder not to return to Savannah."

One held him down while the other proceeded to slice a shallow x cut across his chest. It hurt, and he could feel the blood trickling down to his belly. He became silent no more.

"Oww, stop!" he screams in pain, for anyone within miles to hear. He felt as a large fish being carved up into filets. "Stop !" he shouted, as tears began to well up in his eyes.

"You will survive, señor, but you will remember not to come back to Savannah."

VII

Deliverance

How did I escape? With difficulty. How did I plan this Moment? With pleasure.

Alexandre Dumas
Count of Monte Cristo

Then, he was told, "We're throwing a bound-up blanket to the beach, with a knife, a long rag, plus a bread loaf and a bottle of water."

They stood him up, unbound him, then threw him into the shallow water just off the beach, so not to ground the sloop.

One shouted, "Clear off and don't return to Savannah!"

He surfaced and staggered through the cool water toward the beach, removed his blindfold and waited till his eyes adjusted to the light. That itself was unsettling but gladly received. To him, it seemed like seeing light at the end of a long tunnel, in a figurative sense. He looked down to see the bloody x carved on his chest.

He only caught a distant glimpse of the sloop leaving and was unable to see their faces. Grateful to be alive, though he knew not where he was abandoned. His lips and inside cheeks felt as the proverbial dry *cottonmouth*. Clothes were soaked and he felt stiff and grungy all over. Stubble covered his chin and his hair felt sweaty and matted. He struggled to wash the blood from his

body, wincing as the salt water stung his new wound. Straggling to wade toward a cleared site, he finally pulled himself up on the small beach. He sat and tried to gather his thoughts.

What have I come to ? He thought. *Left to die like a Robinson Crusoe ? What kind of villains would do this to a person ?* Suddenly, like a wild animal would react, he reached for the goods slung onto the beach. Grabbing for the bread, he ripped off a piece and chewed like a cave man.

That was followed by heavy gulps from the water bottle. It refreshed like manna from Heaven. Though his head still ached and his chest stung, he was confident in his survival skills. Checking his pocket, he found to his surprise that no money was missing. He continued sitting for a spell, thinking of what would be his next move. *This is most likely an island off the coast of Georgia or South Carolina. Probably inhabited, with Indians or plantations. My hope is the latter.*

Observation gave insight. The small clearing seemed to be a pivotal point between the ocean to the east and the marshes to the west. After resting, he tore the rag thrown to him and wrapped his chest, giving emotional if not physical relief. He slowly began to walk first east along the water, then west, looking for a trail inland or some signs of life.

The woods alongside were jungle-like, similar to those around Beaufort's isles. The small beach was no more than ten feet wide. His fatigue and the result of mental harassment led him back to his starting point. He decided to lay down and rest,

then seek sustenance of some kind later. Sleep overcame him till late afternoon. Awakening to a vast feeling of hunger, he decided to seek nourishment. Being familiar with coastal isles, he knew for what to search.

The tide appeared to be low, so he could search for oyster beds by the marshes. Nearby in the mud flats and shallows he could see one, as if just waiting for him. Having boots, he waded out to it in the cold water and plucked some oysters from the mud. Carrying an armload back he brought forth the knife thrown to him. Working with his blanket in one hand and the knife in the other, he shucked and ate till he could hold no more. *So thankful for this*, he thought.

As the sun began to set, he lay down, pulled the blanket over himself and sleep again overcame him. To his good fortune, wintertime prevented bugs and mosquitoes.

Next day came clear and bright as he planned again to search for a trail inland. Before venturing too far, he looked and found Glassworts, a wild plant, edible, among some of the adjacent salt marshes. Not too tasty, but nourishment of a sort.

Traipsing again east and west, he finally came upon an inward trail. He speculated that based on the sun's location in the sky, by entering, he would be traveling north on the trail. The foliage and trees were thick alongside the trail, but he knew the January cold would keep the snakes underground.

The path is narrow but adequate. Anything could happen, I could come upon a group of

unfriendly Indians, a pack of wolves or even a crazed hermit living alone on what appears to be an island. Wishing for my pistol, or even a rifle. Got to be prepared to go in the bushes should I hear someone walking this way. So happy to be free of those blackguards.

About half an hour later the trail took a turn to a double-rutted wagon road. A decision was made to continue north, hoping to see some hospitable life soon. Live Oak trees were everywhere, all covered with Spanish moss. He began to see small well-kept homes, all with blue doors and shutters. He had heard that some island people did that as they believed it would ward off evil spirits. Signs of life helped to relieve his feelings of desperation.

Soon, to his amazement, he met a large Negroe man walking in his direction.

"How do Cap'n," he said, as he was lighting his old cobb pipe with flint and steel. "Whes oonuh* goin'?"

"Where am I?"

"Oonuh own Dawfooskie Isle."

"I'm Edwin Willingham. I'm aware of this island, as I live in Beaufort. I'm looking for the nearest plantation home."

"Uh tek oonuh dere, but doan be walkin' east, by the coast, spesly at niht. Oonuh would come to Bloody Point**, where longtime ago Spanish soldiers were beaten and now dere haints roam."

Should I tell him I just came from there? He pondered, with a grin. Edwin realized he was

* Gullah-you ** 1700's Spanish and Yamasses invaded English settlers, but were defeated

talking to a legendary Ogeechee Gullah Negroe.

" Oonuh on Mayrose*, de Mageen Plannayshun. My name is Sorie."

" Where's the plantation house?," Edwin asked.

" Uh gwine tek oonuh dere, but feed oonuh fust, 'cause oonuh look porely."

He easily succumbed to the invite. Entering the cottage, he smiled and spoke to Mrs. Sorie, who bade him sit down. She knew what was needed. Soon, Edwin savored corn pone, eggs and hot coffee, served by the family. He was reenergized and his body felt aglow, like the sun reappearing after a storm.

"Thank you so much, as I was starving. Some bad folks had kidnapped me and dropped me off this morning into the water from a boat."

" Why de do that to oonuh?"

" I think they're criminals and are afraid I might arrest them for the Savannah Sheriff."

" Oonuh has a Hag Boo after oonuh."

" What's that?"

"Gullah HooDoo say bad spirit Hag Boo after oonuh."

Wide-eyed, Edwin asked, " You practice VooDoo?"

" Mostly our root docktor do, as he cannuh rid of bad spirit."

At that point Edwin, feeling awkward, offered thanks again and persuaded Sorie to lead him to the plantation house.

Soon, he met John Mongin, the plantation owner. He was discoursing with his overseer of

* Melrose, the Mongin Plantation

the day's activities and was surprised when Edwin appeared. Tremendous feelings of relief coursed through Edwin's mind and body, as additional notions of civilization returned to him.

Edwin introduced himself, then spoke " 'twas an ill wind that blew me here, Mr. Mongin." He tells of his assignment and his plight, being kidnapped in Savannah by black-hearted scoundrels.

"They sailed me down the Savannah River, then over here to Daufuskie. I wondered the whole time as to what they planned. They blindfolded and terrorized me, talking about crazy pyrate punishments. Here they dropped me in the water just off a small beach, after my having spent a harrowing night and morning in their boat. Sorie found me traipsing about and his wife fed me breakfast before he brought me here." Edwin realized it was comforting to his spirit just to share his travails with someone.

Mongin was welcoming and advised he had lived in Savannah where he was a cotton factor. In 1804 he sold his home and he and his wife moved to the Island to direct their cotton plantation.

"You can spend two nights in my home till the upcoming Wednesday, at which time we can send you north on a watercraft up Calibogue Sound. Then you'll be rowed east to Kirks Landing on the May River. The next day you can take the stagecoach that stops every Wednesday overnight at a home used as an inn. On Thursday morning, it goes to Savannah on its Charleston to Savannah trail run."

"That sounds great. I'm much obliged.

I have heard of Kirk's Landing*, being from Beaufort District."

Edwin became cognizant of the fact that Mongin was successful, though he was garbed in well-tended but casual plantation clothes. *He appears to be around 60 years old, moving about easily and seemingly fit, with a bearing like that of a young Olympic athlete.*

Mongin gave him clean clothes, a jacket and shoes and his wife washed the knife cuts on his chest. She then applied aloe vera and wrapped him in gauze. He was able to sleep soundly that night, after being well fed and having learned much about the island's history.

During supper that evening, he inquired, "Do you ever become lonely here? "

Mongin, glad to answer, replied, "No, we both have daily duties operating the plantation. As far as socializing, we go to Savannah on our sloop once a month to church and to visit old friends. We have an overseer and his wife whom we trust.

Charleston is visited for entertainment, as it has much to offer. But here, for the most part, it's peaceful and we can enjoy the beach and all the fish, oysters and crab we could want. So, it suits us. My wife, Sarah, reminded me to mention that you have an invitation to visit with us anytime."

"That's right, dear," she contributed. "We often invite Savannah friends to spend a few days here with us. We take them to the beach and introduce the Gullah culture to them," she said, smiling

*now Bluffton, SC

towards Edwin.

At first meeting, Mongin had displayed a steely exterior, but Edwin soon realized that within was an honorable, intelligent man, with a heart of gold.

The next day Edwin was allowed to wander the large plantation, even to the Atlantic Ocean beach. There, he took the waves and swam up and down, something he hadn't done in a long time. The water was cold but refreshing.

It's as though I'm at Bath, England, nurtured at the springs spa. Always fantasized of going there. Makes me want to forget my investigation and just stay here. He lay on the beach and dozed, with nothing in his ear but the surf.

Waking after a morning nap, for a brief time he was puzzled at his surroundings. Reality soon returned and he reminded himself that he would leave on the morrow. *Back to my life in Savannah, which is good, so to continue my investigation.*

The next morning as he was preparing to leave, Edwin expressed his gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Mongin. They stood on their porch, smiled, and sent their regards to Mayor Charlton in Savannah.

The crew set out north on Calibogue Sound from the southeast side of the island in a large pirogue. Its oars were manned by four workers plus one foreman, Sorie, his friend, who handled the tiller. Much Gullah talk sprang forth and though Edwin couldn't comprehend it, he enjoyed the sounds, which were quite colorful.

They began to sing in unison as they pulled the oars. *It's like a rehearsed scene at the theatre,* he

imagined. He could not grasp their dialect but recognized the melody, *Kumbaya*, a popular spiritual. It was stimulating and he even tried to join in a little. The float was pleasant as they traversed the placid Sound waterway, soon turning west into the May River.

The Herons and Egrets flew in and out of the marshes after feeding at low tide. The sun shimmering on the water produced in him a tranquil state. To his joy, dolphins would surface, playful-like, alongside. Salt marsh and *Spartina* cord grass in brackish water produced a familiar coastal smell to Edwin.

He considered himself so fortunate now and was ready to return to his mission. The frightening experience with the Spanish villains still drifted in and out of his mind. He pledged to himself to find them. *They present as a tall mountain that I will climb.*

In due course they moved upstream to Kirk's Landing, where he would board the stagecoach to Savannah after overnight at the inn, albeit a home. Upon arriving, he thanked the men for bringing him, but asked them to wait while he obtained some food for the whole crew.

He ascended the landing and went to the home to arrange for five whole cooked chickens. It was a large, two-story, mostly non-descript abode. On entering he registered and ordered from the kitchen. The manager was most obliging.

He soon returned and presented the cooked chickens wrapped in paper, along with a large jug

of water. They were overjoyed and each yelled *tengky, tengky**! He thanked again and left them to enjoy their victuals.

He proceeded upstairs to his room, realizing the location actually turned out to be the only quarters available. It wasn't enticing, but he needed food and a bed. Resting in his room, he began to ponder again now that his kidnapping and rescue were over. He was finally freed from his nameless fears. *This episode has pretty much confirmed arson, as someone wanted me out of town. So, no more investigation is needed in that respect. But I will capture those outlaws back in Savannah.*

He thought back to Savannah Deputy Shed's comments on pyrates and how they could be the firebugs. He also recalled all he'd heard and learned of pyrates. There were less now than in years past, but they were still around.

He'd heard them referred to as the purest expression of human rebellion. It was commonly known that many of the Spanish pyrates were rejected boys that hung around and slept at the Seville, Spain, waterfront, destitute, having no place to go. Young and desperate with few options, they would become novice mariners, seeing mistreatments and suffering their own aboard ship. This bred lawlessness and eventual violence to others as they grew older.

It was well known that after they became skilled sailors, especially in the Indies, they would desert their ship and join a pyrates band, plundering and

*Gullah-thank you

capturing, regardless of the nation. He supposed that aging pirates could easily turn up in Savannah and could kidnap, or worse, for money. He could attest personally.

The night had been cold and dark, so on awakening, it was with pleasure that he greeted the first glow of a new day. After breakfast, the stage driver briefed the passengers, some for the second time if already en route. He was genteel enough, attired for the road and often called "Brother Whip."

He announced, "The roads are dusty, so remember that the men should wear bandanas and the women, veils. Everyone needs to bundle up, as it will be a trip of about twenty miles that takes about four hours, including crossings on the ferries."

He continued, as if by rote, "Traveling by stage can sometimes be a little daunting. Many years ago, Judge George Walton was attacked and beaten by highwaymen while on his way to court. On another occasion, a stagecoach full of lawyers went into the nearby Ogeechee River when the bridge collapsed. But those situations are rare. Land travel takes place on dirt roads which are often rutty and muddy. Also, it seldom happens, but if a highwayman should accost us, no bother, as I have my flintlock musket."

It made Edwin wish for his new flintlock pistol with the revolving cylinder, which he left back in Savannah. All four travelers climbed aboard, including a pretty young lady and a middle-aged couple, the Bedsoules, who had visited friends in

Charleston. The two men sat adjacent, as did the ladies. Edwin advised all that he was on a special assignment in Savannah, although his home is in Beaufort.

The young woman, Susannah Jennings, gave her name after he introduced himself. They each shared a courteous smile.

VIII

The Highwayman

Highwaymen, swindlers, and card sharks, their family history was both colorful and dark.

Kelley Armstrong
Canadian author

"How was your evening in the Inn?" Edwin voiced.

Miss Jennings smiled, then grimaced." It was barely tolerable. Dirty sheets, bugs on the walls, and a dirty wash basin. I did have a single room, but the food was tasteless."

"Pretty much the same for me," he said. "I had to stay in a room with two snorers, plus I think I heard the wolves howling last night."

The couple riding with them seemed to concur with all their comments and remarked they were looking forward to going home to Savannah, where their home was spared from the fire. Miss Jennings indicated that she was returning home to Savannah after visiting friends in Beaufort. Edwin advised of his special assignment for the Mayor.

He noticed the book in her hand and asked what she was reading."

"*Pride and Prejudice*," she replied," and I also like *Sense and Sensibility*. Both by Jane Austen. I like the characters' personalities and Austen's grasp of human nature. By any chance, are you a reader?"

" Yes, I just completed *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, by Washington Irving. My goal is to read next *The Expedition of Lewis and Clark* plus *Last of the Mohicans*, by Cooper."

Enjoying the pleasant conversation, he asked about her life in Savannah. "Were you born and raised in Savannah?"

"I've lived there all my life, and it's been a pleasant place in which to grow up. I went to Talvande's Ladies School in Charleston for one year, which was interesting. Several friends went to girls boarding schools up north, but I was content with a private tutor. My father, Thomas Jennings, is the Deputy Collector of Customs with Collector A. S. Bullock, on East Bryan Street. They collect import duties on port arrivals for the Federal government."

She seems to enjoy conversing, no shyness. That's appealing. Attractive too, he mused.

Without hesitation, she continued, "My parents came from Ireland, where my father attended Trinity College. Afterwards, he and my mother emigrated. I have one brother named Trevor, and, thankfully, our home escaped the recent fire. My parents sent me to friends in Beaufort for several days after the fire, as there was so much turmoil. I came some thirty miles from Beaufort to Kirk's Landing by stage, which took about six hours. We also ferried the Broad River about half-way here."

Edwin now felt obligated to tell of his family's history. He tried to be humble.

"I was born on a plantation in the Santee, South

Carolina, area but we moved to a plantation in the Beaufort District when I was a toddler, as my father had died. My mother remarried and then had several children with her second husband. She still controls the original Santee plantation with an overseer and my step-father's advice. I could someday return there and operate it with my brother who is now in college. The last three years I've been in England, at Cambridge for two years and then on the London police force for about a year. I'm now living in Beaufort."

With a hint of a smile, she asked, "But not yet married?"

He appeared glum and replied, "My traveling job prevents meeting eligible's. I'm about ready to change that." He said with a mischievous smile. "Other than the fire in your town, have there been any other recent significant events?"

"Well, President Monroe's 1819 visit with cannons heralding his arrival, a new church dedication with him present and a ball in his honor. While visiting, he stayed at the Scarborough's home. Mr. Scarborough, one of the owners of the steamship SS Savannah, took the President on a short area voyage aboard the steamship. That was not long before the historic transatlantic sailing. He also attended entertainment at the Savannah Theatre. I didn't get to meet him, but my parents did."

"That's impressive. Wish I could've been there," he replied.

"You know," she said, "My parents and I prefer to travel by steamship from either Beaufort or Charleston to the Savannah River mouth and then downtown. Or vice-versa. But I wanted to try the stage one time, though this may be my last, especially with all the pounding, the dust and a highwayman being possible."

"I really didn't have a choice as to travel, based on how I arrived here yesterday," he said. I was briefly marooned on Daufuskie Island, which is another story," he replied with a mysterious smile. "A very hospitable planter that I met, a Mr. Mongin, formerly of Savannah, was very accommodating. He allowed his plantation folks to row me here in a large pirogue."

The coach would bounce and jerk, as it rumbled along the narrow trail, with adjacent large bushes sometimes slapping the sides. Edwin related it to breaking in a new horse and being thrown to the ground over and over. Conversation helped to douse the somewhat monotonous journey and Edwin realized he was quite taken with Susannah.

The middle-aged couple spoke little, but smiled at each other as they listened to the young folks talk. It turned out that they were friends of Susannah's family and so posed as a prearranged escort for her.

Quite a few miles into the trip, the stagecoach driver yelled "*Whoaaa* !" It stopped, with each occupant having to gird themselves.

A loud voice outside could be heard, "STAND AND DELIVER, everyone out!"

Edwin peered carefully through the window. It was a highwayman, black-masked, on horseback, pointing his rifle toward the driver. Everyone groaned. Edwin looked at the passengers and placed his raised forefinger to his lips.

He slipped out the far side door, planning to circle through the bushes and go around behind the brigand. Palmettos and small trees were thick so he had to move at a slow pace. Meanwhile, the driver climbed down and motioned for all to come out. Edwin found a large limb as a weapon and moved stealthily onto the stagecoach trail behind the holdup man. With a large *whack* to his arm, he knocked the rifle loose.

Before the robber could respond, Edwin kned him in the back, then applied a right fist to his head. Moving around, next came a kick to the stomach. As the bandit bent over, he received a final blow to his jaw. With that, he crumpled. Using his fight training learned at Cambridge, Edwin had subdued and then bound the bandit with the driver's rope.

They placed him on top of the coach, bloody nose and all. He would be delivered to the Savannah Sheriff for jailing, trial and sentencing. His horse was tethered behind the coach and would most likely be sold at auction with his rifle.

While still atop the coach, Edwin asked the highwayman his name and why he held them up.

Though weakened, he responded, "I'm Doak Jones. Meant no harm to anyone. I just needed funds to live on. I served with Andy Jackson in Florida in the Seminole War. When my enlistment

was up, I had no money and couldn't find a job. So I wandered north. This is only my third time."

Edwin jumped down so to climb back aboard.

Susannah was impressed. "Goodness, you surely know how to handle bizarre situations," she remarked, smiling.

"I worked for the London police and had to know what to do in trying circumstances. I also learned a special fighting art known as Muay Thai from a young Siamese prince, who was allowed to attend Cambridge. Glad I could help today."

The driver was appreciative and said, "Man, you whupped him in short order. You're the beatenest fighter I've ever seen."

As they were climbing back into the coach, Edwin asked Susannah, "May I share a seat next to you?"

"That's fine," she declared.

The coach was small, so their shoulders touched. She felt a strange sensation, so she tried to cover her feelings by asking more of his fight training.

"It wasn't something I expected at Cambridge," he responded, "but I was pleased to meet the young Siamese prince. His country trades with the English, so he was allowed to attend, which was unique. He taught me many age-old fight moves of his countrymen. I only want to use them to defend, as needed."

Edwin also felt a slight stirring sitting next to her. Her brown wisps of hair were seen peeking beneath her bonnet, her smooth, porcelain skin,

her green eyes and the slight fragrance of sweet powdered perfume were very appealing.

The driver, still on the ground, announced to the passengers, "We'll soon turn onto the Union Causeway Turnpike which will lead us to the Savannah River's Back River Ferry. Screven's Ferry, the main one, moored at the river in downtown Savannah will be the last crossing."

Edwin made it plain that he wanted to leave the stage after the upcoming Back River Ferry. "I won't cross with you on the main Savannah River Screven's Ferry downtown, as I must walk downstream to find another."

"You can do that," said the driver, puzzled, "but why?"

He said, "It relates to my assignment. Forgive the secrecy, but I need to arrive downstream, unseen by most. Please don't mention me around town for awhile. Don't want certain folks to know I'm back yet."

Back in the coach, now traveling, he spoke to the others. "What the highwayman did was wrong, but I feel sorry for him. He's just mustered out of the army and couldn't find a job. In England they're called *Gentlemen of the Road*, as most are mannerly. They should be called *Robbers of the Road*."

Soon as they ferried the Back River, he asked the driver to stop and wait for a few minutes. With goodbyes to the Bedsoules, he asked Susannah to step outside for a word as he readied to walk. "May I call on you in Savannah? I'm staying at

White's Merchants Inn for the next several months."

She paused, appearing surprised, but answered, "Yes, I'd like that. I live at 321 E. York Street in my family's townhouse. Send me a note first, the date and the time and I'll send a return note by your deliverer."

"That I'll do," he said with a big smile. He then paused and gently kissed her hand. He looked deep into her eyes and wished her *good travels* for the remaining journey and then departed. Walking away, he turned to wave and noticed that she was watching him leave. *That's a good sign*, he thought.

As he proceeded, he suddenly felt shaky. *Goodness, has she had that much effect on me?* But he continued along the marshy trail and after a short while, arrived at the river. A small ferry boat was available to row him across to a landing near the boat construction sites at the far east end of town.

It was now January 25, and he had been in town only ten days when an unexpected conflict appeared. Without hesitation, he planned to continue his fire investigation, along with reflecting on the kidnapping, which he had a notion provided some correlation.

His thoughts were also of Susannah. *I've heard that opportunity often arrives as more of a whisper than as a shout. I feel fortunate.*

The next day he walked towards Susannah's home at 321 E. York Street*, feeling good after having sent a note and receiving confirmation of a visit. As he strolled en route, he admired the homes around Washington Ward, a few late 18th but mostly early 19th century houses of Federal townhouse design.

So eye-pleasing, he thought. *Not just homes, but pure works of art.* He'd been told that because of the narrow lots, several stories were constructed for adequate space. Plus that the sandy streets necessitated raised basements to keep sand out of the main house.

Before long, he glanced up, noticing he'd arrived. He stood for a few moments to enjoy the sight.

A handsome townhouse...from what I've heard, built just two years prior...Federal architecture...fan-light doorway....geometric proportions....two stories over a raised brick basement....dark blue clapboard siding.. on pleasant Columbia Square..... my interest in Savannah's unique homes is growing.

He climbed the steps, holding the white wooden railing. After reaching the top, he heard voices as the front door opened, revealing two well-attired women who appeared to be middle-aged. They were laughing and saying goodbyes, appearing to have enjoyed some joke between them. Seeing him, the taller of the two regained her composure and turned to him.

* Built 1818, now Historic Savannah Foundation HQ

"You must be Mr. Willingham. I'm Susannah's mother, Mrs. Jennings, and this is my friend, Mrs. Flo Gadson."

Edwin removed his top hat, bowed slightly, saying, "I'm delighted to meet you both," as he smiled.

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Willingham," as she also spoke farewell to Mrs. Gadson. "Flo, it was wonderful seeing you. I look forward to our dining together as soon as this horrid fire business is behind us."

"Farewell, Mary. It was nice to have met you Mr. Willingham. I do hope to see you again soon."

"Do come inside, Mr. Willingham, as I believe Susannah is expecting you. Take a seat in the parlor to the left of the hallway while I go and let Susannah know you're here."

As he entered, Mr. Jennings arose from a green wing-back chair in the corner of the room. He strode towards Edwin and stretched his hand toward Edwin's, claspng it in a strong grip. Edwin felt as if his solid grasp was saying.... *I hope your intentions are honorable toward my daughter.* But the feelings softened as Jennings smiled and introduced himself, portraying the perfect gentleman.

Susannah wasted no time arriving to the rescue, as she knew her father could appear intimidating toward her suitors.

"Oh, Papa, I see you've met the young man that captured the highwayman when we were accosted on the stagecoach.

And who could be capturing my heart, thought as she spoke.

Susannah again introduced him to her parents as a resident of Beaufort, South Carolina, on special assignment for the Mayor. Everyone was polite and hospitable, thanking him for the stagecoach action in subduing the brigand.

"I was pleased to use the skills I've been taught," he volunteered.

"It may be the last time she'll be using the stage," said Mr. Jennings. "The steamboats are more comfortable, especially if you have a private cabin."

Edwin believed it best to now advise everyone why he had been hired by the Mayor and Town Council.

"My job is as Fire Investigator for suspected arson of the recent fire. There's been no formal announcement, but I'm certain that the town will soon become aware. I experienced special training during the year I was on the police force in London. That was after my being at Cambridge for two years. Of course, I missed America the entire time."

As they conversed Susannah was thinking, *Edwin is such a handsome and well-educated gentleman. We definitely have a mutual attraction.*

Just before he departed, the front door flew open and a dark-haired young man dashed in, appearing about sixteen years old. He stopped abruptly upon noticing the stranger in the parlor.

"Trevor, step in the parlor so you can meet the

man that saved your sister from the highwayman."

Always obedient to his father, he strode in and stretched out his hand, which was received by Edwin.

"So, you're the gallant fellow that saved all from the dire circumstances on the road back to Savannah."

"We did have quite an adventure," responded Edwin, bestowing a sly wink to Susannah.

After some enjoyable conversation with the family, Mr. Jennings invited Edwin to dine with the family the next evening. Turning to Mrs. Jennings, he accepted with pleasure. At that, he decided not to linger too long and aimed for a courteous exit.

"I look forward to a treasured home-cooked meal and to hearing more of your charming city," he said, smiling.

Susannah escorted him to the door and held her delicate hand out to him. She felt her heart skip as he gently caressed her fingers and kissed her hand. His eyes seemed to devour hers and she felt a blush filling her cheeks. She looked to see if anyone in her family had noticed this intimate moment.

Edwin was amused at her shyness as he bowed and soon moved down the steps. At the bottom he turned to see Susannah watching him and then swiftly closing the door.

The Jennings welcomed him again the following evening and invited him into the dining

area. It was aglow in the candlelight, lighting up the fine linen and china. The crystal wine goblets seemed to reflect the warmth of this welcoming room.

At the table, Thomas Jennings spoke. "I've heard more of the investigation, so I hope that you can help us, having been told of your impressive credentials."

Edwin thanked for the compliment and assured him that he was following some important leads. After further spirited conversation, he thanked Mrs. Jennings for the great meal laid out, voicing again that home cooking is always best.

Afterwards they all retired to the parlor where Susannah entertained them on the piano. It was a custom for all educated young ladies to be accomplished on this new popular instrument.

He soon began escorting Susannah to socials, usually to her parent's friends' homes, such as banker Richardson's Regency-style home on Abercorn Street, designed by William Jay and built in 1819. Edwin was astounded that it had indoor plumbing. He enjoyed himself, though he was a tad uncomfortable advising that he had grown up on the Jaudon Plantation in the Beaufort District, now on special assignment for the Mayor.

But he was aware that family heritage was still considered the best guide, regardless of education, in judging a person's nature and character.

Some of the local *Merchant Princes*, as they were called, were introduced to him, such as

William Scarborough, merchant and planter, also from the Beaufort area.

Edwin was happy to meet someone from the same part of the state. It was known that Scarborough was the main investor and promoter of the famed SS Savannah, the first steamship to cross the Atlantic.

He also met his wife, the exuberant Julia Scarborough, a highly acknowledged socialite in Savannah, often referred to as *The Countess*.

She gave hugs to all, whether new friends or old, along with, "Dahlin, it's so nice to see you."

He soon realized that the Jennings were an upper middle class family, though they were often included in popular upper class social gatherings around town. He deduced that it was because of their likeability and social qualities. Plus, it had to be due to Mr. Jenning's position at the Customs House, his militia rank and their membership in the Independent Presbyterian Church.

Mrs. Jennings was very popular and was involved with many ladies' functions. Susannah herself was a committee member of the annual Cotillion Ball. It was a dinner-dance where select young teenage girls demonstrated their learned table manners, conversational ability and the current dance moves with young men invited to attend with them.

A couple of weeks later, Edwin escorted Susannah to a fete on West Broad Street, at the Scarborough home, also Regency-designed by Jay

the previous year. He was learning that Jay was the current *bon prefere* architect that had captured Savannah as a prince just crowned.

Hearing that hostess Julia was expecting 300 to attend that evening, it seemed so on arrival. As a popular hostess, she knew many Savannahians. But she apparently forgot Edwin's own previous introduction.

After another intro, she asked him the familiar line, "Who are your people?"

He was happy to repeat for her, while stifling his desire to laugh. "Oh, yes, the Jaudons of South Carolina, of course," she said, conveying her radiant smile. She then proceeded to convey her usual hug. One for Susannah also, of course, though it seemed to be perfunctory. It was next discovered that her husband liked to have the party quartet play a folk song so he could sing for the crowd.

As the evening passed, Susannah introduced Edwin to a few of her girlfriends. When he wasn't watching, they gave her smiling approval nods. She was pleased.

She also assisted in helping Edwin meet Francis Sorel, shipping merchant, Isaiah Davenport, builder-architect, plus merchant Andrew Low. It was a grand event, with well-attired servants being very attentive to guests. Fires were maintained in every room, as were food samples. He noticed the ladies' elegant dresses and the men's courtly attire as impressive. For example, a local Militia Captain was sporting a light blue jacket, pinned

with his militia insignia and black satin breeches sporting white silk stockings. The words didn't pass his lips, but Edwin concluded he was truly in the center of *high cotton*.

Thinking, after they made courteous goodbyes, *what a far cry this is from a blindfolded kidnap or a highwayman robbery attempt on a wilderness road. I believe I like this best.* He smiled to Susannah and gave her a hug, then drove Mr. Jennings' pride and joy, his one-horse Phaeton carriage to take them all to her home.

He also thought, *but I can't let the social scene, so vibrant, distract me from my mission.*

IX

Anguished Revealed

If I can stop one heart from breaking, I shall not live in vain.

Emily Dickinson
19th century poet

Edwin was now convinced more than ever that arson was the reason for the fire. Having acquired a list of possible suspects, how long they have lived in Savannah, states from which they moved, whether honorable or not, he would proceed to investigate.

Walking along Bay Street, he observed the stately maiden Mary Telfair, daughter of the former Governor. She was with a group of ladies that were arranging household goods for the homeless in the park and was enthusiastically supervising them. When she concluded giving orders, Edwin walked over, introduced himself and proceeded to compliment.

"Madam, I'm very impressed with what your group has brought about. Many have commented on your benevolent assemblage."

Speaking pointedly, she countered, "Well, it's a pleasure as well as an obligation to help our town, as it has meant so much to my family. Savannahians are demonstrating their resilience and their desire to recover our livelihoods. Incidentally, I hear you going to find that arsonist that caused it all. "

" I hope to," he remarked, smiling.

Returning to his hotel, he was enjoying dinner when amiable manager Jamie Dale came and sat for a time at his table, bearing an inquisitive look.

"Well, have you had some fruitful interviews?" Dale inquired.

"I have and each day brings new and interesting insights."

"Have you started reading our daily Georgian Newspaper yet?" Dale asked.

"Yes, it's enjoyable, but it certainly has a myriad of ads."

"Yes, it does, and of course, national news is slow to arrive," added Dale. "You know, one of these days, we're going to have better and quicker communications."

"How's that?" questioned Edwin.

"Communications, communications. That's all they talk about in New York City," espoused Dale. "I discovered such on my recent visit there. There's been little written about it, but word is there are several in that part of our country experimenting with telegraphy, with code to be sent through wires strung from town to town. I don't quite understand it, but look forward to it," he said, with a look of favorable incredulity, while displaying one arm, palm up.

"In our lifetime we've seen the cotton gin invented, the steamship brought forth, the coming of the railroad, a vaccine for Smallpox, gas lighting and the stethoscope to aid physicians. Anything's possible, wouldn't you say?"

"Certainly," responded Edwin, "especially with encouraging enthusiasm like yours."

Dale continued, "changing the subject, you know we've a number of folks at the Inn here who've lost their homes from the fire. I can see the despair still on their faces. Makes me sad for them."

"Aren't they receiving support from friends and the city?" asked Edwin.

" Yes and that's been wonderful. Every day someone comes by to offer clothing and other necessities. But," he paused, "What they need desperately is comfort. Someone that will listen to them talk, so to share their anguish. I think losing your home, with some having faced a harrowing experience, has left them wounded. You know, in their head."

"Can I help?" asked Edwin.

"Mrs. Willis, on the second floor, hasn't left her room. She has two small children and her husband is very stoic. Plus, he was out of town when the fire occurred. You have an entre, being the investigator. Would you talk to her ?"

"Yes, of course. I'll try this afternoon. Maybe have her leave her kids in the room and we can go outside on your patio."

Tapping on Mrs. Willis' door, Edwin introduced himself as she opened it.

"Mrs. Willis, I'm so sorry for the loss of your home and belongings. As you may know, since I'm investigating the cause of the fire for the

Mayor, I thought perhaps you could help me."

She stood there, unmoving, just staring, with no particular expression. She was obviously an attractive woman, but no attempt had been made to look presentable, he considered.

Convincing her to leave the room and walk outside to the patio was, he considered, a major step accomplished.

"If it's not too painful, could you recount what happened on that night?"

Mrs. Willis didn't respond at first. Knowing she was pained, he tried to be patient and not forceful.

"I'll try," she spoke, holding her head down. "My husband was gone on business. It was my two kids and myself. In our house on East St. Julian Street. It was the most scared I've ever been in my life." He noticed a few tears forming in her eyes.

"We lost everything except our lives. I'm grateful for that. But the memory haunts me. I can't sleep. I miss my own bed. Sometimes I have no appetite." She had to pause, as if trying to regain her breath or her voice. "I've nightmares about it, of the fire closing in on us. I become jumpy when I hear the Exchange bell or even a church bell ringing, as on that night. Even the smell of smoke is distressing."

She began to cry, softly, without wailing. *I'm not used to this*, he thought. *But I can sense the impact it has had.*

"It's wonderful to be alive, but I hope you catch the rascals that did this."

"I'm glad you're alive also. I do believe talking about it can help relieve you. That's what my Mama always told me," he voiced, smiling.

She continued, "I've always slept soundly. Nothing could ever disturb me. So the warning bell pealing didn't awaken me. The middle of the night, I did hear pounding on my locked door downstairs. Rocks were being thrown, shattering my windows. I thought it was an intruder at first. I didn't want to get up. Then I smelled smoke."

"I could hear my neighbors yelling--'*get out! get out! your house is on fire!*' Leaping out of bed, my first thought was for my children."

She paused again, wiping away tears. "I raised the upstairs window. I could see smoke and fire everywhere. It was terrifying. They continued yelling...'*get out! get out!*' Then I heard buildings crashing and people screaming. It was like the end of the world.

I rushed and woke the children and headed downstairs, but the fire was at the bottom, threatening to come up. The children were screaming. I was screaming inside, like someone possessed. It appeared as there was no way out. We hurried back upstairs and yelled to friends in the street that we couldn't get out because of the fire downstairs."

"One shouted back, 'jump, one by one, we'll catch you in a blanket. It's the only way!' Well, I was terrified, but decided we had to jump. Smoke was burning my eyes and throat and it was becoming very hot inside."

She stopped again, as Edwin listened, wide-eyed.

"The kids were clinging to me, coughing and wailing. I told them we were going to play a game. We're going to jump and they're going to catch us. I tried to make it sound like fun. That stopped their crying. My eight year-old daring son volunteered to go first. He climbed on the window sill and yelled, '*here I come!*' He was so brave. They caught him. Next, I yelled, '*here comes my five year-old daughter.*' I had to trust them on the ground. I was praying too. I dropped her out and she too was caught."

"*Jump, Mama, jump*, is all I heard next. So I did, closing my eyes. It seemed I was falling forever, like a shooting star in the night sky. Then I hit the blanket, with four strong men holding it up by the corners. It was then I noticed that embers were floating everywhere and it was like the night had turned to day." She then seemed to relax, having given her story.

"That's quite a story, Mrs. Willis."

"Yes, and I will be strong for my children. No crying in front of them. In fact, I'll encourage them to speak their feelings. It's cleansing, like taking a hot tub bath, but on the inside. I know we'll recover, have a new home and our wits will return. Life is precious. I'll never take it for granted again. I hope I've helped you some."

"Yes. And you've made me more determined than ever to arrest the fire starters. Thank you."

She reached out for a hand clasp on his departing and it was then he noticed her red, swollen, burned hands. *A badge of honor, he thought. I realize that there were many others like her and that the fire took not only belongings but a part of each heart affected.*

That night after supper, Edwin returned to his room and lit a candle. He began to write as much as he could remember of his inquiries. He would refer to them often, seeking clues that he hadn't noticed in the beginning. His stack of notes grew as the days passed, as did his use of candles.

Sometimes he would think back to previous cases solved. One in particular stood out in comparison. The next morning he recounted it to Manager Dale as they shared a cup of coffee.

"Talked to Mrs. Willis yesterday. I think it was healing for her to reveal to me what she experienced during the fire. I hope it helps."

"Glad to hear it," commented Dale.

"You know, I've been thinking of a somewhat similar arson case I worked. Not anywhere near the size of Savannah's fire, but interesting in comparison. I was called to Wilmington, North Carolina. Prosperous port city and big center of trade and politics. Asked to solve the burning of a large beautiful mansion downtown."

"Inquiring around, I discovered there had been a love triangle between two well-known young businessmen and a beautiful young woman. The burned house was the family home of the newest

suitor in the triangle, now favored by the young lady. The other man, of course, was the jilted lover. I realized *that* could be an arson motive of the jilted. I searched for days at the scene and found no clues."

"Then, as a last resort, I searched the bushes that surrounded the house beyond the large yard. A broken classic-looking snuff box had been discarded into the midst. Perhaps thrown into the bushes in anger. It had a gold top to the case. I inquired of the Mayor and a few Aldermen if they recognized it. None of them did. By then most townsfolk knew why I was there.

So, each morning I shared coffee with different businessmen at coffee houses. Casually, I would take it out of my pocket and ask if it was recognized."

He continued, "Most spoke no knowledge of it. One young man looked at it, then at me, then back and forth. Nothing was said. He then stood, paid his bill and left. I followed him outside and implored him to tell me to whom it belonged. He was hesitant, but he identified the owner. He had not known how to answer me, as the owner was a good friend. He was also the jilted swain."

"What came next?" asked Dale, "this is intriguing."

"Well, then I had both a *motive and physical evidence*. We soon wound up the case. That fire was started by a lamented and unstable mind. That's probably why the young woman rejected him."

"Wow," said Dale, "love can make some men lose complete control over their emotions and go to extremes."

"Yes, it can," agreed Edwin. "A lot of arson cases have similarities. I think my one at hand here may be more complicated and could involve money."

"So, Edwin, with my changing the subject," Dale asked, "how goes the courtship with Miss Jennings?"

"Best I can tell, very well. We do enjoy each other's company and her parents are quite hospitable. I've never been what you'd call the romantic type, but I believe she's changing that," a broad smile creasing his face. "I don't know about her former beaus, if any, and it may be best not to know."

Dale commented. "Knowing the family as I do, I don't believe she's had any serious beaus."

"One thing I do know, I can't wait to see her tonight!" Edwin declared.

X

The Forest City

*These manifold grassy parks(squares), or lungs of the city
as I heard them called, are very picturesque and inviting
and highly suggestive of health and comfort.*

Early 19th century
Savannah visitor

Edwin awoke from a nightmare...*a highwayman
had subdued him...sold him to pirates...who
dangled him upside down from their ship's
yardarm and taunted him with further torture...
all pleading went unheeded...*

Awaking....feeling anxious.....he recalled the
dream in part, but perceived it as an apparent
flashback to his kidnapping and the highwayman.
He began clearing his throat, a mannerism called
forth when he was discomfited.

After breakfast, he decided to take a stroll to
clear his head. He soon walked on Bull Street by
the Independent Presbyterian Church. It was a
beautiful example of English architect Christopher
Wren's style in white. Its single steeple was
magnificent and a delight for the eyes. He soaked
in all the surrounding beauty of Savannah, which
produced a needed calming effect.

Even in the middle of the scorched area with
many in despair, he was still enthralled. He
thought, *as I look all around at the homes,
squares, moss-draped Live Oak trees with huge*

black trunks, sandy streets and grand flowing river, it feels as an idyllic oasis.

He admitted to himself that every day was exciting for him. He had always loved academics, but he loved investigating and solving more. He also knew the cotton business was in his blood, possibly waiting to emerge like a newborn baby. He pondered that one day he may be back in South Carolina managing the family plantation.

Becoming a factor too, was appealing to him. Right now he was energized as an investigator, with the added attraction of the lovely Susannah. Back at the hotel, having been inspired, he proceeded to write a letter to his mother, but with no mention of the Daufuskie Island kidnapping.

February 15, 1820

*Mrs. Elais Willingham Jaudon
Beaufort District
Robertville, SC*

Mama dear,

I am staying at White's Merchant's Inn in Savannah, which has very good accommodations. This is a beautiful and active town, cosmopolitan and cultured. It is situated at a spot called Yamacraw

Bluff, which is about 40 feet high above the river.

Cotton warehouses rise up below the bluff, four to five stories high. Their top floors are for cotton factors' offices.

The offices, called Factors Row, have doors and bridge walkways leading across to the Bay Street side downtown. I've been told that now it may be the largest cotton exporting seaport in the world. The business has slowed this year after the fire, but cotton commerce is still a boon and has enriched many planters, factors, merchants, builders and shippers.

Eli Whitney's cotton gin has certainly changed the world. It has drawn many of the genteel and educated class from northern states, as RI, NY, NJ, Penn. and from Europe - Ireland, Scotland and

England. Coming here are some honorable and gifted architect – builders, as, William Jay, recently of England. His unique Regency style architecture has captured the fancy of the wealthy, for whom he's designing many homes. Fashionable ironwork is provided mostly by local foundries.

I've been told that the river's name and subsequent town name may have derived from an alteration of the Shawnee Indian name. They resided in the upper reaches of the river in the 17th century and were known as the Savano.

Invitations have come to some beautiful homes untouched by the fire, where at socials they serve amazing food and have string quartets to play fanciful waltzes. I've been a fortunate participant with new friend Susannah and her

family. Of course, the fire has slowed some of these activities, but the city is making big plans to rebuild. The literacy rate is good here, with many reading *The Georgian*, our local voice. Quite a few of the planters' sons attend Yale.

The town is similar to Beaufort, but larger, and Charleston, which is larger than both.. Charleston, of course, has more wealth and an aristocratic atmosphere. Beaufort differs in that it has very large lots downtown. Therefore, as you know, it has the large plantation-style homes. Savannah's homes are mostly townhouse type residences on small lots.

The fire has produced financial aid from many cities around America. However, some northern cities have placed stipulations on their donations. They want the

funds to go only to the poor. This has upset the Mayor and some Aldermen that donors think the town would not be honorable in dispensing. They have sent the donation back to NY. Thus boiled up again the "Missouri question." Out of Congress and across America, especially in the papers. Whether to allow Missouri statehood with or without slaves being the issue. A national tempest, hope it doesn't worsen.

The books they read are popular novels as, Ivanhoe and The Legend of Montrose, both by Sir Walter Scott. Jane Austen's novels are also popular. The Masons have their Solomon's Lodge, supposedly the oldest lodge in the country. The Hibernian Society started a few years ago to help needy Irish, who quietly recognize St. Patrick's Day by going to mass. You could say that

Savannahians, in short, like cotton commerce, harbor watercraft, parties, balls, grand houses, magnificent churches, Ladies Aid groups and Gentlemen's Clubs. Militias, horseracing, hunting and golf are enjoyed by the men. Local and touring shows at the Savannah Theatre all add to active lives here.

They are apprehensive of fires, yellow fever, malaria, cotton price reductions and port competition from Charleston.

Like many seaports, there is also revelry at the waterfront at night. Excess rum imbibing and fights in pubs are all too common. It's like London in that respect, but on a smaller scale and with less slums. There are quite a number of Negroe freedmen here, who have their own means of income, as carpenters, cooks, wagon and carriage drivers,

housekeepers and small merchant tradesmen.

The NW part of the bluff area has lodgings for them plus the laborers, dockworkers and sailors. Irish immigrants clan together in small homes in the NE part of town, near the old Fort Wayne. Some shipbuilding is ongoing, but not on a scale as in the NE, as in, say, Newburyport, Massachusetts, a similarly sized town.

Give my love to the family. Will keep you posted on the fire investigation plus my courting of Miss Jennings, the nice young lady I have met here.

Lovingly, Edwin

As he reflected on the letter written, he realized that his life was entering a new chapter, enjoyable but also challenging. It was to be a watershed time in his life, but he looked forward to it.

That day he spent trying to relax and to think of the investigation. Come evening, he read *Robinson Crusoe* by lamplight, to ease his mind and to help him drift off to sleep.

Cold Dark Water

When you go through deep waters, I will be with you.

Isaiah 43:2

As the cool breezes of March arrived, Edwin and Susannah's relationship had grown to one of easy familiarity and restraint. They found much in common, but resisted desires that lay below the surface of their thoughts. They filled those moments with humor and playfulness.

One such day, with the permission of Susannah's mother, Susannah filled a hamper with picnic delicacies and a quilt. They strolled downtown to the park on Bay Street overlooking the river. A patchwork quilt was extracted and Susannah gave one end to Edwin. They began to playfully toss it into the air so that it would land on the grass, all stretched out.

Then Edwin reached into his leather satchel and produced his favorite bottle of wine and two chargers.

"Oh, my," she exclaimed, "you came prepared!"

They sank to their knees on the quilt as she took from the hamper a copy of *Mansfield Park*, Jane Austen's latest novel. "It took her 2 years to write it. It may take me that long to read it." *If I don't stop fantasizing about Edwin*, she thought. "It's one of her most controversial novels, with many love twists. The road to marriage is always a key theme in her books."

"Sounds like an interesting novel," replied Edwin.

The air temperature was pleasant at about 70°. It was a day you'd wish to be frozen in time, with a clear blue sky and the Meridian sun bestowing warmth and glimmers of light on the river.

Twenty-three year old Edwin gazed at the smiling eighteen year-old beauty. She was all grace and charm. *What more could a man want?*

"So, tell me about your readings," posed Susannah.

"Gladly," he responded. "I've been reading *Robinson Crusoe*, one of the first novels to be written. Are you familiar with it? Shipwrecked, all alone, survival on a wilderness island for years. He saves an aborigine from cannibals and they develop an island life together. I like to imagine that I'm the hero. But I'd only want to be there for about two weeks."

That brought some laughter from Susannah.

Edwin thinks, *I love to hear her talk and hear her laughter. See her curly beautiful full brown hair, with bonnet and shawl removed. Admire her tiny waist in her stylish attire.*

Being so close as they both took the food from the basket, their hands brushed and each felt a moment of exhilaration. He glanced around to make certain no curious eyes were watching and Susannah held her breath as he ran his fingers through tendrils falling by her ears. Then their lips were like magnets gently drawn to one another. What began as gentle sparks turned to something more.

Their eyes were shining and they both seemed entranced. Gazing into each other's eyes made words unnecessary.

After moments passed, Susannah felt the need to refocus their attention away from the desire she knew was moving between them. As she handed Edwin a plate of food, she began talking of life in Savannah, of her Literary Club, church functions, afternoon teas and Cotillion ball volunteer service.

He thought while she was talking. *When should I plan to kiss her again? Needs to somehow be more private.* He poured each a small glass of wine and toasted the day.

Feeling jubilant, she continued. "I had to learn the rudiments expected of a southern young lady, including the receiving of potential beaux, none of which have previously interested me," she admitted to Edwin, smiling.

"Hmmm, I like the sound of that. I find your activities fascinating. I hope to be more involved locally myself," he responded. With a grin, he brushed a misplaced hair from her forehead. Once more she felt her heart beating.

"Does that mean you'll want to continue to live in Savannah?"

"Of course, if that's what it takes to be near you." Their eye contacts then conveyed more than just sight itself. As he said those words he placed her bonnet back onto her head and tied the ribbons under her graceful chin.

They had noticed the sky darkening with rain drops imminent, so they gathered everything up

and walked back to Susannah's home on York Street.

"It's been a very enjoyable picnic. We must go again," volunteered Susannah.

"Yes, I agree and I enjoyed the company as much as the food," he responded, smiling.

They said a warm goodbye on her doorstep.

Late that afternoon, he decided to go back downtown, when fewer people were gathered that time of day. He was feeling elated from being with Susannah, but also subdued since they had parted. Trying to think through his investigation's next step, he leaned against the Bay Street cannons, the most prominent fixtures in the park. They were a gift from General Washington to the Chatham Artillery Militia for their diligent service in the Revolution.

Bay Street had become his favorite place to linger, seeing many friends and just feeling a part of Savannah. Most of the temporary tent dwellers, the homeless, had left and found better quarters by now. He thought of all the daytime street merchants that had sprung up since Market Square had been affected by the fire and explosions.

Produce sellers, fish mongers, herbs and spice merchants, bakers. Even fortune tellers. Now where did they come from? He wondered. Are they locals or gypsies passing through? Palmistry, the reading of someone's palm to tell the future. It's beyond me. Some are superstitious and fervently want to know their future, even paying money to

be told. Like the years ahead were on a scroll, just waiting for someone to reach forth and read aloud.

Remembrance of college days at Cambridge came back to him, when the Roma gypsies would pass through, taking financially able students' pounds to have their palms read. He realized the students did it as a lark, something to talk about over an ale. It was soon forgotten.

Most of my enjoyment came from the English history classes, learning from whence my family came. Daily fascinations were derived by just hearing the British accents, which I was unable to imitate.

Departing the cannons, walking east, looking toward the harbor from that end, he relished the view, especially of the river, which still gleamed. He reflected on it. *This deep, wide and relentless stream, so quiet, yet so strong, purely dominates the scene. It's the lifeblood for commerce and Savannahians set great store by it.*

The sun began to set, the tidal flow moved upstream and shadows began to cast on the tall ships, which presented trim forms, tall masts and furled sails, themselves the symbols of trade and industry.

Seagull squawks blended with the whistle of a late arriving steamship, spewing trails of white smoke. Few townsfolk were downtown now, as it was late in the day. Edwin was amused at the sight of Trevor Jennings, Susannah's brother, having his daily swim in the river's edge, regardless of the

water temperature. He followed the long ago tradition of some Indians. This would be a day to keepsake.

Suddenly, he was grabbed from behind by two men. One pummeled him in the back and conked him on the head, knocking him to the ground. He was held as the other tied on a blindfold and then bound his hands. He resisted but received blows each time he tried.

One spoke, "Stop it, mi amigo, or we weel plug you rite now."

Dazed, he still could speak, "You blackhearts will not get away with this! Turn me loose and take me on one by one, if you're man enough!"

Spanish accents were heard again as they dragged him down toward riverside, now with a rag stuffed in his mouth. He tried to muscle away, but they were strong and there were two of them. *This can't be happening again, he moaned to himself. It's like a fabled tale of an ogre re-emerging from his cave and resuming his prowl.*

They added one end of a long rope to his body and the other end to a large nearby ballast rock. Removing the rag from his mouth, they immediately threw him into the river. Going into the deep water was frightening and a shock to his body. It was so cold he couldn't think. He settled to the bottom, holding his breath, wondering for how long and if it even mattered. There was no way he could untie the rope from himself.

Once again, he felt as if death was staring him in the face. After what seemed an eternity, he felt

someone grab him. He had an awareness of the cutting of rope, then being helped to ascend to the top. Just in time he was able to breathe again, midst gasping and coughing. He had been rescued by none other than Trevor, Susannah's brother, the swimmer.

Climbing out, he was shaking, breathing in short breaths and trying to overcome the immense sense of helplessness he had felt.

"Drats ! Drats ! I feel like going down to the waterfront and emptying my barker at every Spanish-accented worker I hear, then reloading and emptying it again !"

Trevor cut the rope binding his hands and wrapped his jacket around Edwin's shoulders to warm him.

"Relax, Edwin. Lay on the ground and let yourself calm down," he declared, wanting to take him to the Jennings home to recoup.

With a trace of fear still on his face, he turned to Trevor, "No, Susannah would be too upset and would begin worrying that I am a marked man."

" Well, you may be," said Trevor," as the villains you're seeking are persistent, since you told me about the kidnapping. While swimming from a distance, I saw them throw you into the water and then run away. I did not recognize them, though I could possibly identify the *bhoys* if seen again. There were no other witnesses around."

" For the first time since childhood, I feel alarmed." It was exhibited upon his entire countenance. "Today happened on top of the

kidnapping to Daufuskie Island. No doubt the same Spanish rascals. I have been duped twice. But I am determined, now more than ever, to solve the case and arrest those outlaws." With that, he slammed his right fist into his left palm for emphasis.

With water still dripping from his hair and clothes, he looked over at Trevor, smiled and spoke with a sense of appreciation.

"I shan't forget today. I'll be forever grateful to you. It was the Providence of God that placed you here. But please don't tell Susannah, it would disturb her to no end."

Trevor assented and then tried to add a little jest to help them both relax.

"By the way, if you had not been pulled out, we would've had to fire a cannon into the water to cause your body to rise. That's an old device used here several times." A wide grin then surfaced on his face.

Edwin gazed at him as if unbelieving, but he also realized how athletic and resourceful Trevor was.

XII

The Disguise

My plan is fraught with subtlety.

The Odyssey

by Homer

Willingham knew that Fernandina in extreme northeast coastal Florida had harbored Spanish pirates and privateers for some time. Many were beginning to leave, as the United States was soon to have Florida ceded from Spain and would be clearing them out. Some surely had now come to Savannah and he believed his Spanish kidnappers may be among them.

In early April he decided that it was time to go shamming at the Sow's Ear on the waterfront in the evening, where the lamps would be dimly lit. He knew full well that mostly cutthroats, ruffians and black hats haunted the wharf pubs at night, often looking for a fight. It was known that blood was often spilled and if someone died, their body would just be thrown outside the tavern. The cemetery cart would ease by in the mornings to pick up any bodies left overnight.

Regardless, identifying the kidnappers, if only by voice, would be a boon. He would adopt a disguise. A big hat pulled down, an eye patch, dirty shirt and pants plus heavy boots would complete his attire.

Aware that it could be somewhat dicey, he asked Caleb Chisolm, the river pilot, to *pad the*

hoof down to the waterfront with him. He would be recognized and accepted. Wise to the ways on the quay and having had the Mayor vouch for Caleb's abilities and character went a long way. He loved Savannah, which lent further weight.

Edwin said, " We'll talk only in low tones. Do our best to avoid conflict, though we could defend ourselves if necessary. My Deputy friend Shed says all the non-reputable folks like to stay *cooned up*, like nesting racoons, at the taprooms." This didn't disturb Caleb in any way, so he agreed to accompany.

Edwin planned to carry his double-barreled Derringer and a visible large dirk* in a sheath on his belt. They would sit with their back to the wall.

When darkness descended on the appointed evening, they walked along the cobblestone waterfront. Passing the night brothels and bars, glaring suspicious eyes were felt casting upon them.

Entering the semi-dark taphouse, they found a table, while overhearing a scattering of rum-induced expletives. Some were given in a boisterous manner. Two of the typical anti-fogmatics** were ordered, so to blend in with the crowd.

They looked for fire-singed hair, though it had been six weeks since the fire. Many there wore caps or hats preventing observation, but still they listened for any Spanish-tinged voices. They heard

* large knife

**slang name for alcohol drunk in bad weather

and spotted two loud ones in a corner.

Edwin conveyed, "They're familiar. One is a bull calf villain and his tablemate is smoking cheap seegars. Rough guys. They display having deep pockets, buying rounds for others at will."

He mused, *plenty of funds from being paid handsomely by a perpetrator? There exists strong indications, but I realize more substantial evidence will be needed.*

About thirty minutes was spent there, enough time to nurse a few draughts and spot the probable blackhearts. The men were then ready to depart. Rising to go, Edwin asked Caleb to find out the name and background of the two suspects. To him, they loomed like monsters of the deep, as displayed on old seafaring maps. They were portrayed as aiming to consume the nearest ocean-going vessel.

As they were departing a large strapping ruffian-type stepped in front of Edwin, eyeing him squarely.

"You doan look familiar 'round here. Who be you? " He brusquely sought to know. Edwin didn't know what to expect, but he was ready.

Luckily, Caleb eased in between the two.

"He's my friend visiting from Charleston for a few days. Came by hired wagon." That seemed to satisfy the accoster, nodding to Caleb. They then moved on outside.

"Well, that was quite an experience," Edwin acknowledged.

Caleb smiled and related that they all like to think they Sow's Ear is theirs alone.

The next evening Edwin happily enjoyed a repast at the Jennings home. He did not mention the previous night's pub visit. During the meal, brother Trevor chatted about his sharpshooters club. Quite a few of his friends, all young men, were enamored with weapons, notably rifles.

"We meet frequently at the edge of town for friendly competition."

Being aware of weaponry, Edwin enjoyed the conversation. At supper's end, Trevor brought out his rifle to proudly display to Edwin.

"It's a Hall Common rifle, breech loading, which is a pleasure to use." He pointed to the inlaid wire decorations, silver finials and relief carving. "It's, to some degree, a work of art."

Some of my group have the same and some have the Pennsylvania Long rifle, very popular now. If the British decide to invade again, we'll be ready for them," he said, smiling. Edwin was impressed.

He felt such a great sense of peace in the presence of Susannah's family. It was easy to note where she acquired her charming ways and likability. Later, after a brief discussion about the weather, the parents and brother went upstairs and left them alone, much to their satisfaction. He felt a deep sense of gratitude, as this was a positive sign of their trust and approval of him. It was the moment for which Edwin had been waiting.

He moved to sit next to her on the couch. As she was placing her handkerchief in her dress pocket, she accidentally dropped it to the floor.

They both reached to retrieve it and when they did, their eyes locked when their hands touched. She released her hold as he brought it to his face and smelled the faint trace of fresh roses.

Never taking his eyes from her as she blushed, she didn't turn away from his gaze. His voice became gentle as he addressed her.

"Susannah, the moment I met you was like opening a door to my soul. Your beauty, sweetness and radiance entered my existence and I fear if you were to ever leave my life, it would be void and incomplete. Thoughts of you begin as I arise in the morning and stay with me till I lay my head on the pillow at night. I look into your eyes and touch your hands and hope that your sentiments are as mine."

"Yes, Edwin, my sentiments are the same. You captured my heart the day you captured the highwayman, and I've thought of nothing more since then."

Thinking he'd never felt such happiness, he wrapped one arm around her waist and lifted her chin to his lips.

"I love you with all my heart," spoken as he brought her soft lips to his.

"I love you too, Edwin. You've given me joy beyond belief."

Susannah later confides to her close friend, Anna Taylor, who lived nearby. They always enjoyed conversing upstairs in Susannah's own bedroom. "I'm falling in love. Edwin has so

many sterling qualities and he takes my breath away when I'm with him. And oh, his kiss. Always on my mind. Can you notice a change in me ? Three months now. Is that long enough to feel this way ? My diary is filled with loving thoughts. I know I'm rambling."

But he has an uncertain future, though a family plantation in South Carolina is open to him. Currently, he has a nomadic job, which he enjoys. If he keeps it, he would continue to travel, often for weeks at a time. He's talked of various vocations, but has not reached a conclusion.

Shouldn't he be in South Carolina, learning to manage the family plantation instead of chasing arsonists? As you can see, there are uncertainties. What do you think?" she questioned, while fidgeting with her necklace.

Anna smiled and commented. "First of all, I'm envious. I think you are being wooed by a handsome young man who far surpasses any who have courted you in the past. Why not bide your time, and when he brings up marriage, inquire of his future vocation plans. Make certain he understands how important it is to you. Your father undoubtedly won't give his blessing without the matter being settled."

She concluded, "I've always been told that when you find that someone, regardless of the circumstances, love always wins. Often, it takes patience, but that makes it sweeter in the long run. Remember when we read Lord Byron, the English poet ? He quoted.....

*Love will find a way through paths where wolves
fear to prey."*

Susannah smiled and nodded agreeably.

XIII

The Duel

The views of the Earl are those of a Christian, but unless some mode is adopted to frown down by society the slanderer, who is worse than a murderer, all attempts to put down dueling will be in vain.

Andrew Jackson

In late April, Robert Habersham invited Edwin and his friend A.C. Baynard, visiting from Beaufort, to an evening at a Gentlemen's Club on Congress Street. No women could visit. Edwin had always thought that A.C. was likable and sociable, so he knew that this would be custom-made for him. The club members interacted, imbibed, played cards, and sometimes gambled. They discussed cotton prices, shipping, and the need for a railroad and a nearby canal to aid the cotton business. Of course, politics and business were always on the agenda.

It was a convivial gathering place for mostly genteel young men of town and the plantations, dubbed the *sporting crowd*. Some, from being over-served, wound up in *affairs of honor*, also known as dueling. Even small differences of opinion could be expanded if fueled by drink. The club's cellar held the finest vintages of Europe and its whiskies and brandies were often requested.

The Savannah Temperance Society, headed by men of influence, always tried to temper the use of intoxicants.

Edwin and A.C. partook of only a small amount of popular Madeira wine, not wanting to lose control and offend anyone. As expected, A.C. reveled in moving about and conversing with everyone, flashing his unabashed smile. For him, the din was invigorating. They were enjoying the company and introductions until another young man suddenly interloped.

He came from what seemed out of nowhere, walked straight to Edwin and challenged him to a duel.

"I am Axel Moreau and I have a proposition for you. *Pistols for two, coffee for one, two days hence.*" * He spoke with a look of cold determination.

"Why?" was the response.

"Because you, Mr. Willingham," as he slurred his words, "are an intruder to Savannah, courting Susannah Jennings, with whom I had a brief courtship. Who do you think you are?"

"Do you still court her?"

"No, not since you came to town."

"I prefer not to duel," said Edwin, "as I don't even know you and you are intoxicated, which alters your judgment. I was raised in the Beaufort District and spent my time on the plantation using firearms often. I became skilled, but I am not partial to dueling."

Then the challenger, Axel Moreau, with a mean-spirited look, walked away, stopped, turned around and scowled, "You'll hear from me," in a very loud voice. Edwin understood why Susannah

*duel challenge--two duel typically with pistols, one survives for coffee

had not wanted to be pursued by Moreau.

Habersham told him aside, "The man is *drunk as Davy's Sow*, besotted and has a habit of challenging often, but he usually doesn't remember his demands the next day. He is a spoiled plantation owner's son, plus here they try to make a *bridge of his nose** when passing a bottle."

Later, the evening felt kind of awkward for Edwin and A.C., so they soon took their leave. Upon their exit, some of the members offered their apologies for Moreau.

Upon being outside, Edwin spoke up. "Sorry to invite you here to now witness a duel, especially since you'll be my second." **

A.C. looked at him, surprised, "Who said anything about being a second?"

Edwin retorted with humor, "If I've got to suffer through this, then so will you."

"Just long as I don't get hit by a stray bullet," said his friend.

"Don't worry about bullets. I'll explain later." He then looked at Edwin, puzzled, but they let the subject drop.

As fate would have it, the antagonist sobered up and did remember the next day. He sent a written message delivered by his second to Edwin's supposed second, A. C. Baynard.

* bridge--pass over him with a bottle

** intermediary, assistant, message conveyor

To Edwin Willingham

c/o A.C. Baynard, second

Pistols for Two, Coffee For One, unless you prefer
other weapons.

Code Duello special rules to govern.

Will take place on the morrow at first light, S.C.'s
Hutchinson Isl., across from downtown, 1/2 mile
on the path inland from the ferry.

Immediate response requested.

Josh Buchanan, second on behalf of Axel
Moreau,

April 25, 1820

Edwin tells A. C., "Advise Moreau's second,
since I'm the challenged, I want to pick the
weapons. *Fists and Skulls*, as it is said."

Looking askance, A.C. retorted, " But, Edwin,
fist fight dueling is seldom done here and he looks
quite muscular."

" No matter. I know Muay Thai, the quick
Fighting Art of Eight Limbs. Learned from a
skilled Siamese student studying at Cambridge.
You fight with fists and elbows plus knees and
feet. It is delivered fast and can be deadly.
Anyway, physical fight duels are performed on
occasion in other areas of America." He spoke as
one confident.

With a sense of doubt, though not conveyed to
Moreau's second, A.C. provided Willingham's
acceptance and choice of weapons. Moreau's
second was taken aback by the method of dueling

chosen and appeared bewildered, but he said nothing, knowing the protocol.

Edwin visited the Mayor and confided of the upcoming duel on Hutchinson Island.

" I feel I must do this in order to maintain my investigative credibility. I'm against it, as it's illegal in some states, including Georgia. I do know that much blood has been left in the sand of Georgia's Tybee Island by Carolinians, as likewise, it's against the law in South Carolina. I know how to fight. I was trained while at Cambridge, so my choice is *Fists and Skulls*. I should be able to put him on the ground posthaste. As they say, *I'm not born in the woods to be scared by an owl.*"

He also told of his harrowing Daufuskie Island experience and decided that the fire starters had *played their hand*.

"Dispensing of me was their goal, but it didn't work. I am certain now of an arson conspiracy. They don't seem the silent type criminals, more the boisterous ex-pyrate type. We witnessed their probable identity while in disguise at the Sow's Ear. Most likely they've had a bankroller. We're going to catch them all."

Mayor Carlton nodded as he acknowledged, pulled out his snuff box, took a pinch to his nose and sniffed. He then squinted.

" Thank goodness you survived that island encounter. I'm pleased that you can handle yourself. Now, we certainly don't want our

investigator killed, as, we'd have to start all over." He turned to Edwin, cocked his head and gave a sly smile.

"Not to worry," replied Edwin. "By the way, John Mongin on Daufuskie Island sends his greetings. He helped me to recover from the kidnapping after the villains dropped me off."

The Mayor looked at him blankly for a few moments.

"Mongin, hmmm. Glad he could help you. He's done well in the plantation business. When he lived in Savannah he had a very attractive home on Warren Square. A likeable fellow.

His next stop was to the Jennings family to tell of the upcoming event. Practicing what he would say to them to alleviate any fears, he reviewed it over and over.

After greetings to one and all, he sat next to Susannah and proceeded to tell what led to the duel.

He declared, "A ridiculous tradition, but please don't be concerned, as I am trained to defend myself, as Susannah witnessed with the highwayman. I don't plan to kill, just subdue."

He continued, "The Episcopal church in Beaufort looks askance at dueling. A deceased member from suicide or a duel, which they consider akin to suicide, must be buried apart from the main church cemetery. That is much to the family's dismay. It's all a vexation to me. I don't hold with it, but it seems necessary so to maintain

my investigative credibility. I hope that doesn't sound inappropriate"

Susannah was naturally appalled and frightened for him, as were her parents. He noted that Mr. Jennings had begun jiggling his leg up and down, as if he were affected by the news. Susannah was twisting her necklace in her hand. Mrs. Jennings left the room briefly with her handkerchief, dabbing her eyes, but soon returned.

"You are like my family here in Savannah. I would never take the risk of anything happening to that. I trust that you'll support me, even though the duel is a disgust to you, as to me. But, trust me, I can handle it with no fear involved. It may seem like a mountain, but to me it's just an ant hill," he said, smiling with that comment.

At that, Susannah wrapped her arms around him, as did Mrs. Jennings. Mr. Jennings came across the room and shook his hand. Edwin felt a strong sense of calm after talking to them.

Later, while walking down Bay Street, Edwin observed yellow pine pollen was everywhere, which was normal for springtime in Savannah. He saw huge clouds of pollen dust flying in the air looking for a place to light. It made him think of folks with no sense of purpose in life. No order or planning, always searching. He thought, *after this duel episode is over, I need to make firm plans for mine and Susannah's future.*

He was approached on the street by John M. Carney, the witty editor of The Georgian

Newspaper. He seemed to just appear from nowhere. Expressing with his quickened voice that he had been asked by Moreau's second to publish the upcoming duel, as was often the custom. He said it was always a tradition.

" I'm disappointed, but it's understandable," returned Edwin. With a stifled grin, he voiced, " You newsmen, do you have antennae like bugs? You know and make known everything."

The editor countered, smiling, "I have three antennae's, one for news, one for opportunity and one for the ladies."

" Really? I am happy though, since your office was burned, that you salvaged the press and found another location. What would we do without our news ? " Edwin said with humor and a touch of friendly sarcasm.

To his mortification, later in the day, he read of the duel in the newspaper, knowing the Jennings family would see it. His biggest hope is that his mother would not hear about it.

DUEL

On the morrow at daybreak, challenger Axel Moreau to Edwin Willingham.

Hutchinson Island, inland from wharf, *fists for two, coffee for one.*

Code Duello prevails. Seconds and surgeons to also be present.

The Georgian hopes best outcome for both gentlemen.

Edwin told A.C. that evening, " Don't want to kill him. Can put him down in a few minutes. Then, I trust, he'll apologize. Distasteful. Insane. Did you know that two hundred years ago, during

the reign of Henry IV of France, ten thousand died in duels ? When the Pilgrims came to America in 1621, the first duel took place at Plymouth Rock. Just to maintain honor. Whatever happened to forgiveness, as we're taught in the Bible ? " A.C. looked at him, dumbfounded.

He continued to expound, possibly to offset his feelings of frustration.

"You know, one of the most ridiculous examples of dueling took place right here in Savannah in the midst of the Revolution. Button Gwinnett, a Congressional signer of the Declaration of Independence, had a running spat with General Lachlan McIntosh. McIntosh was the Commander of the Georgia Battalion, a position Gwinnett vastly wanted. Gwinnett took it out on McIntosh's brothers, harassing them in various ways."

"Unhappy with Gwinnett's behavior, McIntosh announced that the man was a scoundrel and a rascal. A classic political squabble. So, it all led to a duel and Gwinnett was the one who died. They're both buried in the cemetery here in Savannah. McIntosh much later than Gwinnett."

A.C. listened, speechless. *I'll be glad when this is over*, he thought.

The ensuing April morning was cool at first light and it was reflected in everyone's breath. The waterfront was yet to come alive. There was fog on the river as each party ferried across to the island, which was noticeably swampy, making it

ideal for rice plantations. They all assembled in a field. Fighters, seconds and a surgeon on each side.

Edwin said a prayer as he prepared to fight. Moreau was dressed in top hat, long coat and usual businessman's attire. He removed only his hat. Willingham, on the other hand, was attired in comfortable plain clothes, whereupon he removed his jacket, regardless of tradition or cold weather, so that he could move about, twist and turn.

Everyone present made cordial greetings, then Moreau's second announced the rules. Next, proceeding to the middle of the field, A.C. delivered the start.....

" Come out by me. Bow. Take your fighting positions."

Judging their readiness, he shouted " Start! "

Moreau spit on his hands and rubbed them together in an age-old move. They continued, posed with knuckles bared and raised. Edwin waited for his opponent's first move. Moreau swung his fist and Edwin ducked aside, then rapidly delivered a right fist to Moreau's head, followed by a quick left elbow to the stomach. His opponent staggered. Edwin next forced his right knee into Moreau's body. He drooped. A forceful left foot to the stomach and he crumpled. Finally, he threw a left fist nose-ender hook, producing blood spurts as Moreau hit the ground, moaning and not moving.

Edwin waited a few moments, then leaned over and conveyed, " Axel, I can kill you with one more well-placed blow."

With head turning, he pleaded, " No need. I give my apologies. I was lost in drink the other night."

So it was all over in about one minute, almost before it started. His second was motioned to come and aid him. After a time, he recovered enough so that Edwin brought him a cup of hot coffee and offered an outstretched hand, which was accepted.

Edwin pondered, *I feel most satisfied with an almost bloodless victory.*

As they walked back to the ferry, he mulled, *I wonder if the arson perpetrator had somehow encouraged this encounter, but with the basic reasons unknown to Moreau?* He then dismissed further thought on the subject.

On the ferry returning to the dock downtown, A.C. turned to Edwin and spoke with admiration. "I couldn't take you now, as I did with our fun wrestling and fighting when growing up."

"You didn't take me EVERY time," said Edwin.

"No, but it was fun while it lasted, " as they both laughed and shook hands.

After breakfast with A.C., he planned to go to Susannah's home once he felt certain the family had awakened. Since it was still too early, he decided to wander and gaze. Heading south on Abercorn, he came to the Old Cemetery,* in use

*today's Colonial Park Cemetery

since 1750. Curious, he entered inside the walls. Observing the tombstones, he recognized names of many patriots past. One tombstone especially caught his eye. It recorded a dueler.

This humble stone records the filial piety fraternal affection and manly virtues of James Wilde, Esquire

Late District Paymaster in the army of the U. S. He fell in a Duel on the 16th of January, 1815, by the hand of a man who, a short time ago, would have been friendless but for him; and expired instantly in his 22d year: dying, as he had lived: with unshaken courage & unblemished reputation. By his untimely death the prop of a Mother's age is broken: The hope and consolation of Sisters is destroyed, the pride of Brothers humbled in the dust and a whole Family, happy until then, overwhelmed with affliction

How sad, he thought, that a young man barely 22, close to my age, succumbed to the supposed honor of a duel. No doubt in the same area as my duel at the island across the river. The thought of it brought sorrow. He felt melancholy, so he proceeded to the Jennings home on York Street. His knock on the door, opened by his sweetheart, followed by her warm embrace and sigh of relief of the duel being over was so comforting.

She made him feel as if his life had purpose, a definite reason to survive.

XIV

Track Firestarters

*No man lives without jostling and being jostled; in all ways
he has to elbow himself through the world, giving and
receiving offense.*

Thomas Carlyle
19th century Scot

Having restless thoughts later in the month, Edwin traipsed down to the riverfront wharf area at mid-morning. He had yet to hear if Caleb had identified the Spaniards they had observed at the Sow's Ear. Looking around, he observed all sloops in port, trying to recall the kidnappers' boat, though he had been blindfolded. He spied a sloop that appeared similar to what he remembers at Daufuskie Island, after removing his blindfold as they were sailing away.

He turned it over and over in his mind, with no perfect conclusion. *It has got to be here. The blackhearts are probably afoot right now thinking of a way to stifle me. I must keep my barker with me at all times.*

On the morrow, he descended down to the river at mid-day. Searching out Caleb, he found him between piloting jobs.

"Caleb, I confess that I need your help and connections in the investigation and I want to pay you as the circumstances arise, if you're available."

Next, he repeated his descriptions as best he could of his abductors and their sloop. He asked again for help in seeking them out along with their boat.

He was confident because Caleb knew the dock workers, the boat captains and the shippers. *He can surface information that I can't. I do have some good bits and pieces. The rum bottle found at the livery, the singed hay accelerant, their speaking accents, their rowdiness, their probable sloop and their spending propensity at the pub. All I will need are their names, their abode to search and the coalescing of all the clues.*

Anticipating being paid this time, Caleb followed up Edwin's request the next day.

"The sloop you eyed is identified with the Spaniards," said Caleb, "but I was told they had just sold it and the purchaser had sailed. The Spaniards also left town this morning. Being vocal, they had mentioned around of plans to ride horses west on the Old Augusta Road."

Edwin thought, *discovered in the nick of time. They are like leaky casks. Not very hushed for criminals. Must derive from their old unrestrained pyratrical ways. It's time to go into action.*

Having their names, they sped to the runaways' abode, it being identified in the far west end of the Bluff. Unlocked, it was entered, but the men halted. "The odor is revolting," said Edwin, "as if swine resided here. In spite of it, let's search for

evidence in these messy quarters and just pinch our nose.

Setting aside empty rum bottles, half-eaten meals on tables and unwashed bed linen, they spied some crushed paperwork. Opening it up and in plain sight they found the address of Mrs. Platt's home and rear livery. Scribbled on the piece of paper was also a time and a date, January 11. It was the date the fire started, as well as the location. Also noted was a dollar amount. No doubt their promised blood money. Lying close by was a tinderbox.

"Again, they proved to be not very well-ordered for a quiet caper under darkness," said Edwin.

He reviewed all the evidence with his assistant. For future use, he made a list.

"I believe we have enough," he voiced to Caleb.

Caleb then spoke, "The Spanish arsonists have fled. They could foresee being caught, aware that the investigator was still seeking fire starters. They may think we'll believe they left by their normal manner, by water in their sloop. But they are so blustery about their plans, they are their own worst enemy. Let's obtain two horses and then go into pursuit."

Two fine steeds were obtained from a livery, one a sorrel and one a dappled gray. They were pleased with the availability.

"The attendant certainly didn't give us the dregs of the horse market," said Edwin.

Caleb agreed, "I think he wants to help us, knowing your job and wanting the criminals caught."

After obtaining directions and journeying thither, they took the Old Augusta Road* northwest from Bay Street downtown. It paralleled the river from a distance. They soon discovered it was only moderately maintained, more like a wide path, just wide enough for a stagecoach to pass. Overhanging trees, encroaching bushes plus occasional limbs lying on the path made traveling somewhat taxing.

As it was May and early spring, hardwood trees were budding, colored red and not yet green. Edwin felt as if the world was coming alive again. At mid-day when they started, the afternoon was a bright haze, sunny and with a sprinkling of clouds. He was always comforted in these type surroundings. He loved the trees, wild plants and animals, as nature was his delight.

Sometimes, nature presented forces unexpected. After trotting as much as possible for several hours, all of a sudden, the horses began acting awkwardly- stomping, neighing and rearing up. A strong smell filled the air as a bear growled off the trail. Caleb's mount reared so high that he toppled off backwards, stunning him. A large black bear appeared on the trail ahead, continuing to growl and headed straight for him while he tried to recover from the fall.

*Ga. Hwy 21

He waved his hands and yelled, but it was no deterrent. Edwin dismounted and ran to help. The bear stood on his hinds and swatted Caleb to the ground. As he was about to pounce, Edwin pointed close to his head and unloaded his revolver. The bear roared and fell, not moving.

Picking Caleb up, he tied a pocket cloth around his head, which was bruised but only bloodied a little.

"Are you okay?"

"Yeah. More shaken than hurt."

"I'm surprised he charged," said Edwin, "black bears usually don't unless they are threatened or have babies nearby."

"Maybe he smelled our packed food," said Caleb, as he sat and trembled, trying to settle down, speaking with anguish on his face. "That was frightening. Thanks for your help. Let's calm the horses and myself and hope the offenders up ahead weren't alerted."

After giving themselves some time to relax, they rode the horses again at a trot as the path allowed, hoping the scoundrels were walking their horses. If so, the pursuers would be following at twice their speed and could catch up to them at twilight or early in the morning. Edwin knew they had to compensate for leaving after the villains did.

After looking all afternoon for southbound riders, the chasers were elated to meet up with one. He slowed his horse to a stop, as did the pursuers.

Edwin voiced, "Good afternoon, fellow traveler. Have you met anyone on horseback riding north today?"

"Indeed, I have," he opined, looking perplexed. "Two roughs on horseback already into the rum and speaking in Spanish. They were moving at a leisurely pace. At that rate, they'll probably arrive at Augustine Creek about dark."

That gave the men an idea of when they would also arrive close to the same spot.

"Much obliged. They are lawbreakers, and we intend to apprehend them for the Savannah Sheriff." Edwin saluted as they moved on.

The men ate on horseback and traveled until the sun went below the trees, so to arrive close to the eluders' camp without alarm. In due time, they arrived at Augustine Creek, which had to be forded. They prodded the horses down the bank and eased them into the water. It was cold, but the bottom felt sandy and was slow flowing with no rocks. With the water no higher than the horses' shoulders, they made it to the other bank.

Edwin was enthused, looking forward to the next morning. Enjoying his surroundings after crossing the creek, he considered *creeks and rivers are one of the few features of nature that are continuously moving....never stopping..... producing beauty..... serenity... and continual energy. A balm for the soul.*

As dark was closing in, they decided to camp. The first task was the feeding of the horses and removal of their saddles. They then prepared a

place to sleep on the trail. Caleb decided to take a short walk north to stretch his legs.

After about 100 yards, he heard some murmuring and rustling in the bushes. With caution, he spread them with his hands and peered inside. It was two Negroes, a young man and woman, appearing quite scared.

"It's okay. It's safe," he spoke. "Please come out and we can give you food." He then reached out his hands to encourage them. It was obvious why they were scared, being runaways, assumed to be traveling at night.

Edwin welcomed them with no questions, as he prepared food for each. This seemed to relax the couple and though still fearful, they were much appreciative. Soon, they made signs that they needed to continue walking north as dark approached. Edwin made no moves to stop them, albeit knowing there was a reward for their return.

"Just be careful, as there are some lawbreakers we are seeking and they are camped on the trail," he told them.

It was not spoken of between the men as they prepared to bed down. It was a waxing moon, so the brightness was a help in preparing camp. Though with only sparse equipment, they were still glad to retire, as blankets were warm as they lay over gathered pine boughs. No fire had been made, as it could alert the ones being sought.

"Caleb."

"Yes, Edwin."

"Just wondering. Have you been in Savannah all your life?"

"Oh no, I grew up in Charleston. It's a great place to reside. My Chisholm family is well-established and I may someday return to my father's shipping business. Think I'm just a few years older than you, so I've got plenty of time. My parents still live on Tradd Street in the Battery area. I've been around boats all my life, so thought I'd strike out on my own for awhile. Savannah's been good. "

"Yes, I feel the same. G'night."

"G'night to you too."

Headed for slumber with the comforting sounds of crickets and tree frogs, they could also hear owls screeching in the night, sounding like elusive panthers.

A dream came easy. *Holding Susannah while sitting on a bench in a square in the evening.....it was dark and her perfumed water was intoxicating.....kissing her over and over....not wanting to stop....it seemed almost real, as dreams do...*

Rising early, again lighting no campfire and eating only dry food from his saddlebag, Edwin's mind was turning. *I trust this will be a bloodless ambushade.*

Still, the waxing moon shed enough light to pack his gear and saddle his horse. Shaking Caleb awake, he suggested that he eat and then prepare to leave. He wanted the element of surprise at daybreak.

"We don't want to play *duck and drake* with them, we want to capture like a thunderbolt."

Plans were to move on the trail till they were

aware of the rogues' camp. First light broke along with ground fog, which could be an aid. After riding the horses for about half an hour, the smell of bacon cooking touched their nostrils. That good old tempting aroma, along with the smell of campfire smoke, was a pleasure for the olfactory senses. But it in no way deterred the huntsmen.

Dismounting, they tied up the horses. Walking up the trail, they heard the familiar Spanish voices. At this point, they entered the woods, moving as a wildcat pursuing his prey, till they could eye the camp. The element of surprise was paramount as they burst on the scene and confronted the villains.

With barker in hand, Edwin shouted, "Hit the ground, you blackhearts and don't even think of resisting, or I will blow your heads off ! In fact, it would give me much pleasure."

As Caleb proceeded to bind one, the other jumped Edwin, pistol or not. It did not take him long to subdue the villain with quick blows using hands and feet. Thus, lying on the ground, he was soon bound also. Caleb stood in amazement, so Edwin recounted his training in England.

" You b'hoys* know why you are being arrested." With a grimace, he continued, "You black dogs! First you burned the town, then you kidnapped and blindfolded me and left me on Daufuskie like an animal. Then, you tried to drown me in the river. I should drag you both down to Augustine Creek, weight you down, throw you in and watch you die." He paused." But,

* rascals, villains

no, forsooth I am taking you back to Savannah, where you'll be tried, convicted and face the gallows." Their eyes were wide as silver dollars.

Under questioning, they would not reveal a perpetrator or bankroller even under the threat of a knife. With smoldering feelings, he thought, *they may not say a blessed word, but they'll pay for their deeds*. They were placed on their horses, hands bound to the saddle horns and tether ropes on each of the reins tied to one each of the captors' saddles. But first the men helped themselves to the breakfast prepared.

"We can't let this go to waste," Edwin expressed, letting the captives watch him devour. His comments accentuated each drop of a morsel into his mouth.

It was a time of mixed emotions for Edwin. He fostered such ill feelings for the villains for what they did to him personally. He wanted to see harm come to them. But as they rode back to town, he acknowledged the feelings to himself and realized he would in time overcome them. He would do his duty in an honorable manner, as he had always been taught.

The sky became cloudy and a light rain began to fall. He looked back at the fire starters, whose mood had become as somber as the weather. They looked dejected and forlorn, as boys caught in a mischievous act. No more fight or bravado was left.

Returning to Savannah, they conveyed the prisoners with a long list of criminal acts

supported by evidence to the Sheriff. They were placed in stocks and would soon be tried. The horses would be impounded and sold, with the proceeds going to the city fund to help fire victims.

The townsfolk were so disgusted with the captives that swearing at them, spitting and pummeling became very common. The Sheriff had to remove them from the stocks and have them transferred to the gaol beyond Liberty Street.

Soon Edwin was rewarded with the promised bonus, part of which he shared with Caleb. He also received an extension of his position for two more months. That would be until to July 15. He made it clear to the Mayor that he was still going to ferret out the funding perpetrator, which he believed existed right there in town. That was his next mission.

Willingham loved spending time on Bay Street. After leaving the Mayor's office, he wanted to just stroll and hang around. Maybe look for news of the day, as he approached a small crowd gathered. He heard a booming loud voice, as if someone was campaigning. He soon recognized Mordecai Brown, lawyer and War of 1812 veteran.

He was holding forth on his belief that Savannah should allow alcoholic beverages to be sold seven days a week, night or day. It was a controversial subject. He was known as violent, aggressive and overbearing, hounding those that differed with him. He was a big man in his forties,

living on inherited wealth and known as an oft-times duelist. He carried a large whip on his belt. Few wanted to dispute him.

Edwin distanced himself from the crowd but soon was recognized by Brown.

"You, there, Willingham. Just heard you caught the pyrate firebugs. When are you gonna catch the one that probably paid them? What's taking so long? We're paying you for results."

This boisterous gruff of a man has a choleric disposition. Never know what's going to come down Bay Street, thinks Edwin. I'm not going to fight another duel. If he should try to jump me, I will put him down. But no more duels.

"Mordecai, do you know the fable of *The Hare and The Tortoise*?"

"No, what's that got to do with anything? You're stalling with fables now?"

"Ask your wife, she'll know. There's a lesson in it, which is- *Slow and steady wins the race.*"

For once, Mordecai didn't have a ready response. He stood bewildered. The crowd soon dispersed.

XV

Ambition Gone Awry

*My ambition is to capture something
transient, but my ambition is excessive.*

Berthe Morisot
19th century painter
Paris

Jason O'Brien was a bright, ambitious young man. He'd completed nine years of schooling, excelling. He'd attended charitable Kildare Place Society School in Dublin, Ireland, established for children of struggling families. Even then he worked part time as a chimney sweep. In 1806 at age fifteen, he relented his education to work full time as a clerk to help support the household. Wealthy families sent their kids to private schools, as public schools were not yet in existence.

He grew up in a poor family in Dublin where his father gambled prodigiously and weekly lost much of his wages. Porridge was served daily in the home, and the children only received a change of clothes and shoes once a year. Like many Catholics, Jason's family was limited in politics, voting, worship and asset ownership, as King George III of England was Anglican. Jason's family suffered.

Eventually, in 1811, he decided to emigrate to America. Sailing for 6 weeks from Dublin to the Norfolk, Virginia, immigration landing was his goal. He would become an indentured servant to satisfy the cost of the voyage. Being twenty years old, his father was happy to sign the agent's contract with the ship owner, who would sell the four year contract to a plantation owner on arrival. This remunerated him for the voyage.

Sailing aboard a packet ship in steerage was tiresome, crowded and invoked homesickness. Still, he forced himself to look forward to opportunities in America. Upon arrival, the contract was sold to a tobacco plantation owner in northeast Virginia in the Fredericksburg area.

He settled in and toiled without complaint, but always anticipated the day when he could set out on his own. He was barely aware that the War of 1812 was taking place, as indentured servants were kept isolated, so not to be tempted by the outside world.

Being assigned among the field labor force, picking and hanging tobacco was his primary duty in season. Other times he would help the blacksmith, which he liked, as it was a learned skill and allowed him to feel he had a loftier job. Being studious, he was allowed to read books from the library of the owner, who took a liking to Jason. It was a way to further his education.

After four years of work, minding his own business and communicating pleasantly with everyone, he was released. At age twenty-four, he

was presented with a new suit of clothes and a reasonable sum from the planter to help his start.

He decided to head south to Savannah, hearing of the cotton exportation boom taking place. From nearby Fredericksburg, he was able to gain a meager berth on a cargo schooner sailing on the Rappahannock River east to the Chesapeake Bay and on south to Charleston and Savannah. Upon arriving at the latter, he knocked on doors until he was hired as clerk at a factor's office on Bay Street by displaying his aptitude, competence and good manners.

Dreams began of one day becoming a factor, knowing that the profession could be very profitable. Renting a room at a boarding house, saving his money, being circumspect, he also attended Savannah's fledgling Catholic church. He worked to know the town and people, becoming sociable and well-liked. After about two years from his start, he had saved enough capital to allow opening his own factor's firm. He, of course, was the only employee in his office. What was once a dream was now a reality of his own castle on Factors Row.

He labored hard, did well and became an admired member of the community. Being invited to join a Gentlemen's Club was a highlight for him, which helped his social and business life. Gambling there meagerly, he also relished playing cards and attending horse races. The business grew enough so several staff members could be hired. He developed a suave and polished persona

and enjoyed escorting the ladies, whether young and unmarried or widowed, but maintained his bachelorship.

Jason developed a charmer reputation but with a touch of boldness, which was either enticing or abhorrent to the women in town. No in-between existed.

By 1819, he had prospered well, but a new side of his personality began to emerge. The success of his societal and professional life was exciting, but it engendered a desire for more exhilaration. He began to gamble heavily, not just cards, but on horse races, cockfights, rifle contests and anything that suited his fancy. He experienced elation when he won, but he began to lose more than he gained and in large sums. Unable to control his passion, he incurred heavy related debts to individuals. He became desperate and felt that he could not overcome his circumstances. So, advice was sought from a close friend, merchant Phillip Grant.

Going to his home and perching on a chair, he asked for a glass of wine. Not waiting to be offered same, it should have been a clue to Grant of something amiss. O'Brien began talking at once.

" I've allowed myself to become loaded with gambling debts," he lamented. " It involves a number of folks who are expecting me to pony up as soon as possible. I'm afraid they're gonna come after me in some form or fashion, if I don't pay up soon." His voice trembled as he talked.

"I suggest you carry a pistol with you at all times," advised Grant. "It'll give you some peace of mind."

O'Brien looked at him, mouth agape. "I've never even held one my entire life," he declared.

They spent much time reviewing a variety of solutions, with O'Brien narrating obsessively due to his anxiety. In addition, his friend had business money problems all his own and the conversation was causing him to tense up also. But he decided it wasn't the time to tell O'Brien. Grant poured O'Brien another glass of wine to help him relax. He continued asking for more, so the bottle had to be removed from the room.

"Have you considered selling your sloop?" Grant inquired.

"I've already signed a note to one to whom I owe much, with the sloop as collateral. It's good as gone," he related. "There are many others, also. If I sold my home, I would appear as destitute in the business world." It was obvious to Grant that his friend wasn't clear in his thinking.

The session ended with no clear solution. They agreed to meet again soon to discuss the situation. O'Brien continued to agonize and his alcohol imbibing began to increase. He discontinued gambling, now being short of funds and fearing more losses if participating.

It was late 1819 and he was so distraught, he even considered taking his own life.

XVI

Perpetrator Clues

O, what a tangled web we weave when first we practise to deceive.

"Marmion"

Walter Scott 1808

" Oyez, Oyez, Oyez ! Everyone's invited to today's May 15th celebration at Chippewa Square at 2 o'clock this afternoon ! It's time to celebrate our comeback from the fire ! Patriotic speeches! Music! Bring your chairs, blankets, victuals and drink ! "

The Town Crier, Will Benningham, with a determined look on his face, paraded throughout town, clad in his proper red and gold coat, white breeches and black boots. These he wore for special announcements. Heralding the event and ringing his hand bell, he was booming his message that could be heard almost a half mile distant.

He also was employed by The Georgian as a newspaper crier, covering the town from waterfront to the southern boundary, hawking with a bundle of copies at each new issue. It was said that he exercised his legs and vocal chords more than anyone in town. His comments to others was

that he felt as an eagle, soaring above the town, providing news. Everyone looked forward to the gala, though a few had begun to trickle away to the mountains or foothills, knowing warm weather was coming and always fearing a seasonal fever onslaught. Whenever it did hit, it was called *the seasoning*.

The time arrived and with a large crowd about on blankets with picnic baskets, Mayor Charlton welcomed the assembly from a raised platform. The opening event was given by local popular Savannah Theatre singer/dancer Lydia Brightwell. It was a half-hour performance that thrilled the gathering. Her act was delightful, as she danced and sang with her costume and parasol.

Also announced for that evening was a paid ticket show at the William Jay-designed Savannah Theatre. The local troupe's production proceeds would go to the city fund for rebuilding and aiding those whose homes had burned.

Several Alderman gave toasts-- to George Washington, to President James Monroe and to various Georgia heroes of the Revolution and War of 1812. Each was followed by multiple cheers along with a cannon firing by the local Georgia Hussars artillery team. Georgia's U.S. Congressman Robert R. Reid gave a stirring oration on Savannah's spirit.

Arm-in arm, Susannah and Edwin were seen as a definitive couple now as they mingled. They had walked with her parents to the festivity, same as riding with them in their carriage to private socials. Always on the alert, Willingham began

looking for signs of a fire perpetrator. Admitting to himself-- *but Susannah is a wonderful distraction.*

As they moved about, Susannah spoke to Thomas Baker, banker, wife Gladys and their children, Charles, eleven and Anne, six.

"Greetings" she said. "How's one of my favorite families?"

"We're doing fine, Susannah," said Mrs. Baker. "Who's your friend?" Introductions were made all around. Whereupon, young Charles pulled at Edwin's jacket. "Whoa! You're the investigator!" he exclaimed. "I love mysteries and investigations. I love reading about them! What helps you to solve arson situations?"

Edwin glanced at his parents and then bent down to answer him. "By observing, looking for clues, asking questions and having patience. Plus, having inspiration given to me by Miss Susannah here," as he looked up at her and smiled. With that, following more small talk, they expressed goodbyes and resumed walking.

"I like the way you took time with young Charles. He's a special child."

"Thank you," said Edwin.

"Susannah, is that the noted architect William Jay over there?" motioning as he asked.

"I believe so. Would you like to meet him? I've met him with my parents."

"Yes, let's walk over. I know he's popular so we may have to wait in line."

Soon they were able to strike up a conversation. "I'm a big admirer of your Regency - designed homes," volunteered Edwin.

"Much obliged," Jay answered. "I've talked to the Mayor and others that building more mason and brick homes will help prevent burnings in the future. They agree, but I don't see it happening. Guess I'm partial because that's the type I usually design and have built. Due to the economy, I may have to relocate to find business elsewhere. "

"Your homes will grace Savannah for years to come," said Edwin.

A very loud orator, Jason O'Brien, could now be heard. On an informal basis, he represented the town's cotton factors. He graced the podium and listening made Edwin somehow suspicious. The tone of his speech seemed to blame the world for the local cotton trade problems. He proceeded to ramble on and on unlike any of the others. His comments and expressions gave the impression of a man unglued. He was like a ship captain whose boat was about to crash on the rocks, anticipating the inevitable.

Later, Edwin asked Susannah to excuse him, so he could quietly discuss the investigation with nearby reputable merchant Andrew Low. Spying her parents, she eased over to chat with them.

Before he could attract Low, he heard a voice, "How-do Mr. Willingham ! Come-eah." It was Deputy Shed Johnson.

Uh oh, thought Edwin.

"Glad you caught them firebugs. Do you think they had a bankroller ? "

"I suspect it," said Edwin, thinking, *Shed's missing front tooth is so obvious. In fact, it's kind of distracting.*

"Well, then I got a tip fau-ya. " I was raised up 'long the Ogeechee River and catching fish was my specialty. I baited fish traps and trot lines all ovah. We always caught a mess. Catching crimnulls is 'bout the same sometimes. You have to bait'em. Catch'em unawares." All said between expectorating tobacco juice on the ground.

"Well, thanks for the tip. That's a very good point," he responded, trying to appear appreciative. " Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to meet Mr. Low close by."

"Aw-ite. He's right ova-dere, in spittin' distance."

Edwin walked away thinking.....*oddly wise? If you didn't get to know him, you'd think he was feckless, moronic. Fooled me at first meeting.*

Finally approaching Low, he reminded him of his ongoing arson investigation and asked, "What did you think of O'Brien's speech ? He goes on as a virtual *bone box*."

"He's disturbed. Anxious. Been laying out considerably at dinner in town lately and not just on rum," said Low.

"Who would be his home insurance agent ?" asked Edwin.

" It'd be the Charleston company or even the Phoenix Co., out of London, with whom so many have insured."

Out of the corner of his eye, Edwin noticed Susannah conversing in a lively manner with a well-groomed young man he did not recognize. *Hmm, he thought, best go back to her side soon.*

Meanwhile, he continued with Low. "Could he have financial problems?"

"Quite possible. Lowered cotton prices have affected many factors. And now the fire, plus I know he gambles quite a bit." Thanking Low, he decided to sleep on it and pay attention to something more important at the moment.

Walking back at a brisk pace, he noticed the young gentleman was gone.

"Well, " he expressed to Susannah, " looks like I better stay close, as another may try to steal you away."

She smiled, then declared, " Why, Ralph Middleton is just an old friend. He never courted me. Are you becoming a little jealous?"

"Not a little, I'm bodaciously jealous," he said, with a grin. He expressed to Susannah, "I'm hopelessly in love," he whispers.

"As am I," she responded, "but how will I ever keep you close by if you continue your itinerant vocation?"

"I'd like to give you some thoughts on that." He guided her to a bench at the edge of the festivities so to have privacy. "My plans are to quit the profession after this investigation is over. The Mayor has actually extended my investigator position to July 15. He hinted that if I'm successful in finding a fire perpetrator, I could be

hired for a permanent position.

But I want to either return to operate my family's South Carolina plantation or become a cotton factor in Savannah. I have tentative offers for that already and I have plantation friends along the Savannah River in South Carolina that ship their cotton to market here."

He paused, pensive-like, then spoke, "I've even thought of finishing my last 2 yrs of college here in America, perhaps at South Carolina College*, before settling into a permanent position."

She responded, "I look forward to hearing what your decision will be and will support whatever you decide."

He also discussed the challenges of his current job.

"Another subject in which I do not confide in others, is this arson investigation. In all cases I've worked, no harm has ever come to me. But here, even though I've unearthed many facts with much support from others, one thing remains. Malefactors have tried to stifle, maybe even destroy me, so to protect themselves." He folded his arms on his chest, evincing exasperations.

"The kidnapping event to Daufuskie Island, of which I have not mentioned before and the near drowning incident, but for your brother, are examples. The duel may have been motivated by the main villain. Dueled with Moreau, of course, but he may not be aware there could have been underlying circumstances. We've caught the pyrate fire starters who caused me so much trouble, but if

*Univ. of S. Carolina

there are bankrollers, they may hire others to strike. At times, it's quite unsettling, though I intend to bring it to a conclusion. Still, it's disheartening." He finished with a grim look on his face.

With much empathy, Susannah tendered, "Dahlin, you're being tested. But you'll run the gauntlet, be successful and finish stronger. Your courage is one thing that drew me to you and inspired me. I have utmost confidence in you."

Lastly, she said, "You know, my Mama used to tell me that when facing a big task or challenge, don't try to resist it, just develop enthusiasm for it. It'll help so much. You can do that. "

She then clasped his hands in hers. He felt that her words of encouragement were a solace to his soul. That spirited him to seek an answer to something of importance to him.

"Thank you. Now, one more thing I've been meaning to ask you. I think you and I abide each other very well. But, do you think your parents approve of me?"

"Yes, yes, yes. Of course they do," she declared. "That's why they ask you to meals with us. Why they want you to escort me to parties with them. I just hope your Mama will feel the same when she meets me."

"I promise you, she will," he said. "In fact, y'all are quite alike."

Later that day, when Susannah was at home alone in her room, she daydreamed of Edwin. She

felt radiant and happy. A scant thirty minutes had passed and she couldn't wait to see him again. She knew he was the man she wanted to wed.

Only four months since we met. I know courtships are supposed to be much longer, but I'm certain he's my love. She thought, I long to be held by him and love him as a wife. To live in our own home and have his babies.

She was still apprehensive of his investigator job and hoped he would settle in a new profession soon. *I hope we can live in Savannah, but I'll go anywhere in the world with him. Being married to Edwin is my greatest desire.* She smiled to herself then dozed off for an afternoon nap.

That night, Edwin dreamed again. *Savannah is burning and Susannah is trapped in a house in flames, screaming for him to come save her. Able to enter the house, but he sees flames everywhere, his anxiety growing. Unable to reach her upstairs, he's desperate as to what to do.*

He awakens, relieved from the nightmare, but still ill at ease. It's morning, he's lying in bed, trying to understand his dream. *Think it may mean she wants me to settle on a profession not involving travel or danger. She probably feels unsettled. I understand that.* For now, Edwin decides he must focus on the fire origin again, so he forces himself to arise.

A visit to the Mayor with an idea was next on his list. He set out on a brisk walk along Bay Street and turned towards the Mayor's office with a special request in mind.

He posed his idea to the Mayor. "Could the City Clerk prepare a map and produce it on scale as if 1000 feet in diameter with the fire origin in the center? It could be no bigger than twenty by twenty inches. I'd need for it to note the names of burned-out owners at their specific locations inside the perimeter."

Mayor Carlton thought and then replied, "I believe we can have that done. Can you explain your purpose?"

"I believe it's possible the perpetrator might have had the fire set near his home so to be certain it burned, thus collecting on his fire insurance."

Mayor Charlton responded, " Hmmm, I knew it was a good idea to hire you," smiling as he spoke.

A few day later, after receiving the drawn map from the Mayor's office, he moved to have the newly formed Aldermen's Arson Committee meet with him. He wanted them to delve into it, so to narrow down a potential perpetrator.

Addressing them, he specified, "I need you to help me select a possible perpetrator from a map I had especially prepared. It shows the area around where the fire started. It could possibly include an arson bankroller's home, as he would have wanted to be sure it burned. For an insurance claim, of course. I hope our analysis will allow him to stand out as if he were a large bear perched on the steps of the Exchange."

That brought out some chuckles but also some

eagerness to help. They were familiar enough with the neighborhood to provide answers as he laid out his contrived map on the table for all to see.

The informal conversation went thus to Edwin's questions and he jotted down the agreed upon answers:

"number of homeowners within the narrowly circled map that were burned out?" -- 12

"number of those with probable heavy debt?" -- 4

"number of those that probably have insurance?" --2

"of those, who is most apt to have instigated the burning?"--1

They all named bachelor Factor Jason O'Brien as being a bankroller for the arsonists.

"The factor orator at the recent Gala ?"

Edwin inquired, anticipating the answer.

" Yes," they responded.

" Have you noticed his behavior changing lately ?"

" Yes," they all agreed it was apparent.

"Another told me the same," said Edwin. "I also observed his rambling odd speech at the gala, which made me suspicious. So I'll look for a reason to meet with him and ask questions under the guise of needing his help. I'm bound to be enlightened, even if he's not aware." *Thinking all the time of Deputy Shed Johnson's comments about baiting criminals.*

It had certainly has validity, but best not to quote Shed to anyone.

" One more thing. Did you notice that the stored gunpowder causing explosions was in the same neighborhood ? Some kind of coincidence ?"

They agreed it was a convenient coincidence.

"Thanks so much for your assistance. I'll bring you a report soon," he said, while rolling up his map. *O'Brien's odd speech and behavior at the recent gala coupled with the committee's comments seem to lead straight to his factor office door*, he concluded.

XVII

Wilmington River Chase

*Always trust your gut, it knows what your head hasn't
figured out yet.*

Anonymous

Edwin paid a visit to Jason O'Brien in his office on Factors Row, under the pretense of seeking his help and therefore extracting some facts without his awareness.

He introduced himself as O'Brien rose from behind his desk, appearing to Edwin to be in his late twenties, nattily attired and cordial as they shook hands.

"I understand your home was burned, which I'm so sorry to hear. Where are you staying?"

"With Phillip Grant, one of our merchants, who's a good friend."

"As you may know, the Town Council hired me to investigate the fire, which has taken some time." Posing a bewildered look, he began. "We've caught the villain firebugs but think there could be others involved. I'm seeking help in finding the cause, and your home was in the burned area, close to where it started. Somehow, I was hoping

you could help me." O'Brien's face then bestowed a frown.

"Can you think of anyone that would be involved with these pyrate arsonists that we've arrested?"

He answered, "No," shaking his head.

"Could it be rabble at the docks, for looting?"

O'Brien responded, staring upward, "Maybe."

Asked why did he think the fire started in the northwest part of town? He grunted, "Dunno."

"Do you think many homeowners in your neighborhood were insured?"

"Yes, I imagine some were."

Edwin then made some brief small talk, so not to seem overly interrogative.

O'Brien's final words as the visit was ending were surprising.

"Mr. Willingham, I'm certain with your knowledge and experience, you'll be able to find any conspirators. I do wish you good luck."

Edwin smiled, thanked him and started to walk outside, thinking, *he seemed uneasy.....only gave brief, vague answers....almost like a child caught sneaking a piece of peppermint....and his flummery to me was only made to make him appear concerned but uninvolved.*

Exiting, the factor's assistant caught him.

"Sir, I'll see you out." He knew Edwin was the investigator and opened the door to follow him outside. Also, opening the door to his mind, he shared some interesting facts with Edwin.

"I lost my own home in the fire. It was devastating," with incredulity shown on his face.

" I recall seeing Mr. O'Brien meeting riffraff at a wharf just before the fire. With our offices on the top floor of this warehouse, we overlook the river and wharves."

He also recalled O'Brien's elation in receiving something major in the mail two days prior.

Probably insurance claim paid, thought Edwin.

"First time in a long time that he was happy. He closed the office for two hours and took me to a meal downtown. I like working for Mr. O'Brien, but I don't like having my house burned," he said, with a trace of sadness, rather than anger. "I have a wife and child that are my responsibilities. We're slowly recovering, staying with relatives, trying to decide on our next move. The aftermath is like a giant black cloud hovering over us that we're fighting to escape."

It was obvious that he, like so many, felt helpless, thought Edwin. He thanked him for the information and tried to express empathy for him and his family. He became almost convinced the factor was the perpetrator after receiving the comments from the assistant, in addition to the other facts he had gathered.

Later, he assessed the situation. *O'Brien's pointed harangue when he spoke at the gala. His awkward responses in the interview and his assistant's confidential comments. His probable financial troubles due to gambling debts, which would cause him to want a fire insurance claim paid. The reported anxious behavior and excess alcohol consumption, noticed by others.*

Edwin acknowledged all these facts were circumstantial, so he decided to question him again. He could almost *smell* conspiracy. The next day, after mid-day dinner, he walked to O'Brien's office. *I'll say, 'more help needed.'*

He discovered that O'Brien had told his assistant he was going to take an afternoon leisure sail down the Wilmington River in his sloop. Through the office window overlooking the river, the assistant had seen O'Brien leaving a wharf with many bags packed and stored. Now Edwin suspected O'Brien's plans were to sail down the Savannah River, then southeast into the Wilmington River and on to the ocean. He imagined him sailing south along the coast to Florida so to escape what he must have surmised was impending prosecution.

Edwin thinks, *he's a bachelor with no family concerns and he has his insurance proceeds. I need to follow and bring him in, as my instincts are strong on O'Brien's guilt. Apparently I planted a "flea in his ear," as he realized I suspected him.*

He rented the only double-canoe* with platform and sail in the harbor. With no ballast and a shallow draft, it would be faster than O'Brien's sloop and allow a speedier sail. He enlisted Caleb Chisolm again to accompany him, as he would know the waterways.

Promptly sailing downriver, they easily caught the wind. From out of nowhere, a shaky feeling seized Edwin and he had an almost uncontrollable urge to either jump overboard or yell. Puzzled, he

*Early cataraman-type watercraft

hesitated to make it known openly, hoping it would dissipate.

Unbeknownst, Edwin suffered an anxious flashback to his blindfolded kidnapping on the river. This was his first time sailing since. He focused on handling the watercraft and surroundings, hoping to distract himself. Ultimately, the anxiety evaporated. Some time would pass before he grasped what had happened. Miserable circumstances often have a way of returning if triggered, he figured.

Traveling at a comparatively fast speed, they engaged the Factor within an hour after turning downstream on the Wilmington River. The packed bags were noticeable as they pulled alongside, lashing the boats together. Edwin advised him he was under arrest for his conspiracy part in causing the fire. O'Brien realized that *the handwriting was on the wall* as, without a word, he irrationally plunged into the water and began swimming, hoping for land on shore and not marshes

Though the water was still cool in spring, it was not a deterrent to Caleb, a strong-muscled man who swam occasionally even in mid-winter.

"I'll get him," he shouted as he dove in. He grabbed O'Brien as they stepped onto a sandy bank and posthaste subdued him.

"Good, Caleb, you handled that with dash-fire!" shouted Edwin.

After struggling to sail both boats to shore, using a tether line, Edwin stepped out, bound O'Brien and went over all the facts with him. Emotions soon surfaced and he confessed.

Embarrassed, he drooped his head onto his chest, then turned around and vomited, reflecting his sense of disgrace. After placing him on the floor, Edwin guided O'Brien's sloop back to town. Caleb sailed the rented craft back.

Going back upstream on the Wilmington River to Savannah, they noticed a small hut on a spot of dry land along the river. There was a pier and a small sloop docked. Edwin pointed to it.

"It's Whitemarsh Island," yelled Caleb. "Most likely a recluse lives there."

Sailing along, he cast a glance over at O'Brien, who had a wistful look in his eyes.

In some ways, I feel sorry for him, to have worked so hard to succeed. Then to have it all come tumbling down, like a house of cards. He didn't fit the profile of a typical criminal, but that of a desperate man or even as a young swain that had lost his love. Pitiful.

As they sailed, Edwin became curious of O'Brien's nature.

"Why did you have me kidnapped and then try to have me drowned?"

O'Brien, still feeling humiliated, responded. "I didn't have anything to do with that."

"But you knew about it?"

Almost in a whisper, he said, "Yes."

"Then you were complicit," Edwin advised him, "A charge all by itself. Who arranged it?" O'Brien clammed up, with no further responses.

Upon disembarking, they took O'Brien to the Sheriff's office.

"Sheriff, *he acknowledged the corn,*" said Edwin, as he presented the evidence and relayed O'Brien's confession.

"And my very capable partner here provided huge assistance in the capture." Later, Edwin made certain he paid Caleb above his normal fee.

That same day, the Mayor rewarded Edwin with a full-time job as Constable-Investigator for the Sheriff. He didn't confide in the Mayor that he wouldn't continue beyond the end of the year.

If convicted, which was a probability, O'Brien's assets would be seized and sold by the court. Most likely, the insurance company that paid his claim for the fire needed to be reimbursed. Any debts would be paid, including those owed for gambling if proof could be determined. The net proceeds, if any, would either be placed in trust or conveyed to the city's special fund to aid fire-affected families. The court would have to sort it all out.

Soon he went straightaway to the Jennings home to tell all the news to Susannah. She was so relieved and so proud of them. As usual, he was elated to share good news with her. An embrace was the best reward of all.

Later at home, he received a knock on the door which produced John Harney. Bearing his trademark-beaming smile and quick wit, the Editor of the the Georgian was there for a first-hand account of the pursuit and arrest, which Edwin was happy to convey. All of Savannah was happy with him, as well as with Caleb, after the article appeared.

Many did not seem surprised at O'Brien's arrest, which amazed Edwin that they had not come forward. He contemplated, *why do good voices stay silent when they're needed and when there's human depravity involved ?* However, feeling very self-satisfied, he thought and smiled to himself.....*that's why investigators are needed.*

XVIII

Betrothal

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.

Jane Austen

1813

Pride and Prejudice

Springtime and the heavy despair from the fire had begun to vanish. The rebuilding of homes was ongoing in earnest and sounds of sawing and hammering around town were comforting.

Susannah was so delighted that Edwin and Caleb had captured the arson perpetrator. She expressed it to her mother one afternoon at tea and also decided it was time to confide in her.

"Mama, I have always perceived that we live so secluded, even in this populous town."

Mrs. Jennings responded, "Well, just remember, dear, we are not wealthy, so we must stay within the bounds of propriety."

"I have thought, in days past that I've met so few honorable young men hereabouts that it's made me wonder if I should live elsewhere."

"Elsewhere? Just to find a perfect young man?"

"Don't forget, you were young once and had dreams," continued Susannah. "In spite of my chatty talk, I believe I have come to know a most respectable young man and our affections are like-minded."

"What leads you to that conclusion ?" Her face brightened. "He is tall, handsome, smart, always well-attired and protective--I have seen that in action. Plus, he dances well," she said as a big smile crossed her face.

"But what of his Christian posture, honor and principles?" Mrs. Jennings asked.

"Yes, all that is very important and in each he is well-set. And he is so attentive to me. He speaks so well and we both have spoken of love."

Mrs. Jennings knew that her husband had been asking around confidentially about Edwin and had received good reports. She still was delighted for her daughter to discuss such matters with her.

"And....his employment ?"

"He's stayed well-employed but on a traveling basis with his investigative assignments. I don't think that will last. I would not want it to do so. I also know he will not continue working for the Mayor and the Sheriff, though he hasn't expressed it to them. His family is firmly established in South Carolina and owns his deceased father's plantation to which he may eventually return. He also has been shown some interest from several local factors."

"Naturally, I'm so happy for you, as I do admire Edwin so much. It's a pleasure having him around, and," she paused to emphasize, "your father likes him." Her mother walked over and wrapped her arms around her only daughter.

Edwin ambled toward the Jennings home at 321 E. York Street, his mind *all-overish*. His thoughts were on discussing marriage with Mr. Jennings. It had been on his mind for some time.

This isn't like me, he thought. Why am I so anxious when I'm doing what I long to do ? As he approached their home, he stopped to admire its beauty. *Maybe, I'm trying to ease my mind a buzzing.*

Later, he sat in the courtyard with Mr. Jennings as the ladies were inside preparing supper. Being aware that Jennings was a Customs Officer, Edwin decided to start their conversation.

"I hear tell that smuggling is active and that it takes much alertness by the Sheriff and the Customs Office."

Jennings replied, "We collect duties on all imports and exports at the wharves, so we're always on the lookout. Leather, china, tobacco, alcohol, especially rum, some from the Indies, some shipped from England. On occasion, to avoid paying the fees, they slip by us, making their smuggling run, taking goods upriver and selling them along the way. That's been done."

He related with a resigned look, "Once the Sheriff hears of it, he sails upriver, but even in finding the supposed culprits, there is no evidence. The products have already been sold. It can be trying. The possibilities of smuggling in our area may soon increase. As you know, we're annexing Florida by treaty with Spain. When they run the

Fernandina pyrates out, some will be coming here."

"That's what I understand," replied Edwin. Satisfied that he felt comfortable chatting with Jennings, he broached a subject on which the family would not be surprised to hear. He could feel a little sweat forming on his brow and under his arms. Clearing his throat several times, he began.

"Sir, I'd like to discuss marriage to your daughter and I come seeking approval. I've known her only four months, but we'd have an appropriate betrothal time. I love her and want to make her happy. I want to purchase a small home for us and in the future, hopefully, build a home suitable enough to accommodate children. My mother's trust will allow me to draw reasonable funds for a home."

"I'll be through with my investigator position no later than year-end, probably much sooner. But I'm not mentioning that to the Mayor yet. I have several future options, as I've had offers from factor offices here. We could move to my family's plantation in Santee, Orangeburg County, South Carolina. It's about a hundred miles northeast, close by the Santee River, where I could assume management."

He mentioned also, "Brother Thomas wants to move to Savannah in a couple of years after finishing South Carolina College in Columbia. He plans to become a factor, which is something we could do together."

"I intend to make a definite choice before marrying." He noticed Jennings right leg now jiggling up and down. *Thinking, HE's nervous ?*

"Sounds like you're in the process of good planning," said Jennings.

"Thank you, sir. "As I said, I'd like to have your approval," as he waited with bated breath, unperceived by Jennings.

"You've got it, Edwin. Mrs. Jennings and I have discussed it all and we think you're the one for Susannah. We're not of exorbitant means, but I do have an adequate dowry set aside. Just promise me you'll conclude vocation plans before the wedding."

"Thank you, sir, that I will do." Smiling, he offers a firm handshake to Jennings. Edwin was so pleased, thinking Jennings of high character and good-hearted. He also felt a tremendous sense of relief, thinking, *this conversation can create as much emotion as a duel.*

That evening, another guest arrived for supper. Uncle Jack Jennings, Susannah's father's brother, had sailed his sloop up the Wilmington River from his home on Whitemarsh Island. With a gray beard and a leathered face from years of ocean travel, he presented a dusky appearance upon meeting. Once a cargo shipper on a schooner, he'd now retired from that life to live alone downriver. The difference between brothers was striking.

They're like chalk and cheese, thought Edwin. Congenial enough, he took a liking to Edwin, who chose not to enter into the heavy discussions of the

brothers. That also made Susannah happy. The men would discuss politics, shipping, the cotton trade and militias. Mrs. Jennings did her best to steer the conversation to other subjects.

Edwin pondered if somehow Uncle Jack could help him in his investigations. However, Jack's character caused him to be a little suspicious, reflective from his police training. He picked up on a few subtle blackguard traits. Time would tell.

Susannah later told him that the Jennings men were half-brothers, which didn't surprise him. She said Jack was ten years older and had left home at an early age to go to sea. He came to America before her parents. Discovering that he was sometimes involved with piracy when he was younger wouldn't be a surprise to her, she had mentioned. But she said her father never discussed that subject.

Uncle Jack enjoyed a home-cooked meal, but he seemed to enjoy the wine especially. He partook of multiple refills and by the time supper was over, he was inebriated. Giving compliments to Mrs. Jennings, he rose to walk back to the waterfront, almost falling.

"Jack, you know we have an empty bed you can use," she volunteered.

"Obliged, but I'll be sleeping on my sloop and then sail away in the morning."

"Jennings reproved him, "Jack, it's not safe at night, walking down to the-----"

Abruptly breaking in, Jack spoke up indignantly. "Balderdash. Listen, Thomas, I've

been in ports at night all over the world, I can take care of myself. I always carry my barker to use if needed!"

The comments were a little loud and it was as if he were giving orders on the ocean. Thomas Jennings said no more, but stood up and stared with his hands on his hips. Jack nodded to Susannah and Edwin and left.

"I hope he makes it okay," uttered Thomas, waving his hand as Uncle Jack departed. "If he wasn't a relative, we wouldn't invite him over. I just always feel some strange sense of obligation."

"My mama always said - you can pick your friends, but not your relatives," opined Edwin, as he smiled and glanced all around the room. With that, Susannah went to the piano and proceeded to play some uplifting music.

The next day Edwin called on Susannah and with her mother's permission invited her for a walk. They went a few blocks to Greene Square. It was at a time when no one else was present, except a few playful squirrels. He guided her to a garden seat nestled under several fragrant gardenia bushes. She waited for him to sit next to her and was surprised when he didn't.

"Your father approved marriage plans last evening. I vowed to him that I would select a permanent, acceptable vocation before a wedding. No more investigative jobs. I know you're aware of my options.

Now on bended knee, he reached into his

pocket and extracted a small leather box. She now realized the tradition that was unfolding before her and was elated. He withdrew the stunning diamond and sapphire ring from its case and placed it on her delicate finger.

"This ring was left to me by my grandmother in hopes that I would secure a marriage as fulfilling as her own. I believe I fell in love with you that first day we met on the stagecoach. Now my love is even stronger. Will you do me the honor of becoming my wife?"

Tears welled up in Susannah's eyes as she looked from the dazzlingly ring to her handsome suitor.

"Oh, Edwin, my heart is filled with joy. Yes, I accept your proposal of marriage. I love you so dearly."

She could contain her excitement no more and impulsively stood up and wrapped her arms around his chest, pressing her body against his. Their hearts beat wildly as their lips met.

Admiring her new ring just placed on her third finger, she spoke with joy.

"I can't wait to tell our friends! They'll be deliriously happy for us !" Another hug was in order.

Upon gathering their thoughts, they decided their betrothal would be announced.

Clasping hands as they sat on the bench, Susannah innocently asks, "Where will we live ?"

He responded. "I can draw on family estate funds to buy us a home. That will be no problem.

I'll begin looking and inquiring tomorrow, if you're comfortable with that," a questioning expression on his face.

"Yes, of course." She replied with zeal.

"In my mind," he said, "I picture a small house in the simple and balanced Federal architectural style built within the last twenty years. I know that Washington, Greene and Anson Wards hold the most of these styles in the northeast part of town."

"I agree," she said, while putting her arm in the crook of his as they strolled back to the Jennings home to share the good news with her mother.

It was the most exciting time in their lives and they walked and talked of future plans.

The next day Edwin was in the hunt. Architecturally, within his budget and preferred area, his favorite became 542 E. State St. in Greene Ward. He had heard that it might be for sale, so he approached the owner. To his amazement it was for sale. They soon agreed on a price, provided Susannah liked it.

It was a quaint one and a half story cottage with a raised basement and lap siding. Built in the simple symmetrical Federal style, it was constructed in the late 18th century. His next step would be to take Susannah to visit, for he needed to have her approval.

Unable to contain his excitement, he hurried to fetch his betrothed and take her to see the home. He wanted her to tour it inside and out.

Visiting, she did love it and in her mind she

even began placing furniture and other items.

"Oh my," she said, "I like it. You don't waste any time."

"I wanted to make haste in case ole Ralph what's-his-name from the gala is lurking around," smiling to her as he talked.

"Edwin !" she exclaimed, along with a soft punch to the ribs, "You know there's nothing to that !"

"Anyway, I'm as happy as can be!" as she reached over and kissed him on the cheek. "This is exciting. When can I bring Mama over to see inside? "

"Hmmm, best to wait till we take title to it," he replied.

"That's fine. I'll just bring her to see the outside."

Just for enjoyment, Edwin later walked Susannah by 503 E. President Street.

"It's one of my favorites, just five years old, though it would cost more than we would want to spend right now. It may not be available anyway. Reminds me also of your parent's home. Perfect Federal style, with symmetry and fan-light over the front door. As you can tell, I enjoy architecture."

"What about Jay's Regency style ?" Susannah asked.

"It's most unique and it's captured the fancy of Savannah, but I have other styles I like more," he quipped. That evening he penned letters to his

mother in Beaufort District and his brother Thomas at South Carolina College. He wanted to tell them the good news that they would likely wed around the end of 1820.

His letter stated - *I'll be 24, she 19 and I'll need to draw down from the estate for a small home in Savannah.*

Broaching a subject he had long thought about, he asked them to think about the possible sale of the family plantation up in Santee, South Carolina. He advised that the proceeds could be invested in nearby rental properties, with someone else to manage them.

The notion was that he and Thomas both would probably become factors in Savannah. He also mentioned thoughts of finishing college in the interim. He expressed much happiness at being betrothed and looked forward to everyone meeting Susannah and her family.

XIX

Stringing Up

A river is easier to channel than to stop than a mob.

Brandon Sanderson

Word spread fast in Savannah of the capture on the Wilmington River of perpetrator Jason O'Brien. Even the wharves workers were glad. They feared a lessening of work for them due to the interruption of shipping because of the fire. If any group could ever be motivated to any kind of mob action, it would be the rabble rousers at the docks.

Roscoe Simmons was aware of that fact, having once been among them until he was able to raise himself up to the life of an artisan, a cooper, maker of barrels. His business depended on shipping also. He had a vicious temper known by all in town, though he did excellent work for the shippers.

Feeling very resentful of O'Brien who was now in jail, he wanted to take action for immediate retribution. *The law works too slowly*, he thought. His mindset was still that of a hair-triggered personality, nourished by years of contentions and fisticuffs so prevalent at waterside. He decided to incite. He was like a tiger stalking his prey.

Returning to his old watering hole, the Sow's Ear, in the evening, he aroused ire by raging speech, amplifying the scene with rounds of rum bought for all present. He stood and began haranguing.

"Listen, me hearties. Jason O'Brien is a scoundrel who was pressed for funds. That caused him to have the town set afire, including his own home, so he could collect insurance! What he's done could affect our livelihood, our existence! He, more than the firebugs, initiated and caused the fire! The rat gave thought to no one but himself and deserves immediate punishment! "

He pumped his fist repeatedly into the air while he spoke. Simmons' looming physical presence and grandiose invectives stirred up the crowd, fired by the rum.

Responses came as a loud chorus of *args*, *yeas*, and *gars* from the bunch. Bellows soon came forth of "Hang him, hang him, hang him, string him up!"

Simmons knew that lynching in early 1800's Savannah was virtually non-existent, though it happened in other parts of the country. That mattered not, in fact, fanatically he thought that he could bring forth an admired name for himself.

Believing he had fired them up, he declared next, "Boys, let's meet here at mid-morning tomorrow. We'll storm the gaol south of town and demand O'Brien be given to us. If there's resistance, we can handle it. Bring no guns, as we don't want to shoot the law. Do bring some rope

and we'll take him to the *big oak* southeast of town, out Thunderbolt Road."

More roars of agreement came forth. Simmons then retired to a table, ordered some rum for himself and tried to calm down. His body was soaked with sweat from his tirades, but he felt triumphant.

The next morning at riverside, men were gathering early. Upon learning of their plans, shippers and boat captains became alarmed and dispatched a runner to Sheriff D'Lyon.

He quickly summoned Edwin and three armed constables and they headed south to the gaol. Edwin sent word posthaste to Trevor, his sweetheart's brother, to come with his rifle friends. He knew that they practiced often with their competitive rifle club. After deputizing them, the Sheriff and Edwin instructed them where to go and what to do if the prisoner was abducted. They knew where the mob would head.

Deputy Shed Johnson said, "I can already hear the raucous boodle coming this way. They'll confront us for sure."

The mob had passed many residents, all becoming horrified when they realized what was happening. Arriving at the gaol with his rough-looking group, the inciter Simmons made demands for O'Brien's release, supported by his large motley bunch. The din was high.

Overpowering in numbers, they pushed the defenders aside, regardless of guns or pleas not to take the law into their own hands. The Sheriff felt

overwhelmed and his ingenuity availed him not. They broke out a trembling O'Brien, who was turning pale as they tied and gagged him. They tousled him along as the mob all headed east. *String him up!* was chanted continuously, bolstered by some with spirits in flasks.

When their march culminated, they gathered around the designated large oak. With the rope thrown and tied over a limb, two men hoisted him up on their shoulders as the noose was placed around his neck. On a signal from leader Simmons, the two men moved, leaving O'Brien dangling, shaking and garbling, trying to call out. A roar went up from the large crowd, who had backed away. The Deputy and constables, outnumbered, watched from afar, helpless.

Suddenly, a rifle discharge filled the air. Trevor, from a nearby tree perch, had shot the rope in two and O'Brien fell gasping to the ground. His friends each fired into the air several times from their various tree perches, which made quite an impact on all assembled, giving the impression of a large group in the trees.

"You're covered and you all make easy targets!" Trevor yelled. The mob cowered. "Disperse, now!" he shouted. They did but slowly and reluctantly with a multitude of oaths issued. The Sheriff's constables now took up their prisoner and returned to the gaol with a sense of relief.

"Consider yourself fortunate O'Brien," said Sheriff D'Lyon. The same day, he had two constables transport him south to the Darien,

Georgia, jail for at least distance protection until the next court session.

Edwin told the Sheriff, " Glad that's over. If O'Brien had been hanged, we'd have to call on the militias to help us round up and arrest the mob. That would've been quite a scene."

"And," spoke the Sheriff, "time in jail for all of them would completely disrupt the port activities. That would affect many."

Deputy Johnson added, "I'm glad the monster has been slain."

The Georgian Newspaper's action-packed article by Editor Harney extolled the heroics of Trevor and his rifle friends and was soon read by all. No arrests were made later except for leader Simmons for inciting a mob and kidnapping a prisoner. He served a two months sentence.

Later, while supping at the Jennings with Susannah and family, Edwin and Trevor related the events of the day. Edwin also voiced what the beleaguered Sheriff had said to prisoner O'Brien as they took him in.

"To tell the truth, I too feel fortunate," Edwin declared, as he gave a face of relief to each one at the table. Mr. Jennings was once again jingling his leg up and down. No one commented.

Drapper's Dilemma

Shopkeepers are not bankers.

Roman General Fabius

Phillip Grant had stood on deck away from the crowded steerage below. 1815 and Liverpool was four weeks behind him and Savannah only two weeks away. Refreshed from the ocean's stout breeze, he dreamed of the ship's landing and a new life beginning. It was like so many before him. He knew he'd left troubles behind, but he tried not to think on it.

Following his father's untimely death, he had inherited the small linen, or draper's shop, being the oldest son. It was in town below their living quarters. After he closed the shop, his mother had agreed to move in with his brother's family. His brother had done well after becoming involved in shipping early in life. She would be taken care of for the rest of her life. She was saddened but had accepted Phillip's decision to emigrate alone. They had no ownership in the small town house building, so it was of no consequence.

He had tried the best he could to make a go of it with the shop. It didn't seem to be in his blood. Having too many unpaid debts and with debtor's prison looming, he had no choice but to run. With what meager funds he had left after paying for the

transatlantic sailing, he set out. He was hoping the law would not trace him to America. He even thought of changing his name.

Liverpool's economics were mixed, though it'd become a huge shipping port for cotton from America's southeast. It was also considered England's most criminally infested city. He'd not miss that part. Savannah was reportedly booming and it would have fellow Englishmen. There was always the chance of opening a new shop, though he was apprehensive about his capability.

Mulling over his other previous occupation, sponsored bare-knuckle fighting or pugilism, would have to be a last resort. He still had a swarthy makeup but was too old now at thirty. Most of Britain had become captivated, including the aristocracy. It had become the national sport of England. It was brutal, with limited rules until the current century. Few Americans were involved except in the large northeast cities.

I was good and I made good money, he thought, as did others. Wagering was a temptation, even on my own fights. But the bruises were no fun. And a man has to find a means for long-term earnings. I doubt that Savannah has taken it up unless on a small scale. Of course, I'm certain the waterfront has its share of nighttime brawls.

Like many immigrants, his arrival was unheralded. He had kept to himself on board, not wanting to be drawn in to talk of his past, so few friends had been made. His boyhood hero had

always been Henry Hudson, England's greatest explorer. In the 17th century, Hudson had searched in vain for a northwest passage to China, across North America, on behalf of investors. He did have the large Hudson Bay and River named for him.

Grant fantasized that he too was now an explorer coming to a new land seeking adventure in some form. It helped him to cope. Practically, though, he soon proceeded to obtain a job as a dry goods shopkeeper's clerk, being able to speak the language he'd learned. Renting at a boarding house, he lived quietly, but ambition was always stirring within him. He also longed to have his own family, though he knew he could not yet support one.

Smuggling

Smugglers were the darkest or most daring. The Smugglers Inn was one of the commonest names for a bar on the coast.

Robert Louis Stevenson
Kidnapped

Edwin read a recent newspaper account about former Savannah Mayor and Georgia Governor David Byrdie Mitchell. Now a Milledgeville, Georgia, resident and Indian Agent, he'd allowed smugglers to keep valuable goods stored temporarily at his Agent's quarters on the Flint River. They were apprehended, and he too was arrested for complicity though no conviction came about for him.

He recalled his conversation with Susannah's father about illegal smuggling and avoiding the required payment of duties. It made him consider if another illegal activity could be tied to the fire, which would have been a distraction for contraband going upriver. Now he had another point to ponder.

That night he dreamed----*he was in a sloop again.....people spoke in what seemed to be a Spanish tongue, but he couldn't decipher.....blanco medio Anglo....como obtener aqui ?..rebanada el*

arriba o lanzar al agua?*

I understood only part of what they said.... didn't sound consoling..... they laughed and became boisterous...as if saturated with rum...it was frightening.

He awoke, overwrought, feeling cottonmouth dryness. Lying there, he remembered bits of his dream with more Spanish rogues intimidating him. It was like the dam of his memory had burst and all the trials he had faced had accumulated on him. He remained undaunted.

I feel there is something still out of kilter...unfinished.. with the whole set of circumstances surrounding the fire... ..the investigation...all the intrigue.. every trained sense tells me there could be another connection with the arson, though I can't bring it to the surface.....

He arose, dressed, consumed a small breakfast, then wound his way down to the wharf area to seek his friend Caleb, the river pilot. He sought help to find out if a sloop had passed Savannah's riverside, unnoticed, slipping upstream at daylight as the January fire had continued. It would have been a perfect distraction during the pandemonium when there was little activity at the wharves.

Informal inquiries by Caleb were again needed to help solve another puzzle. Later, after casually investigating, he advised Edwin off to the side of others.

"I can't reveal my source, but yes, it's believed there had been rum smugglers from Spanish-held

* Anglo amidst Spanish...how'd he get here ?... slice him up or overboard?

Fernandina in northeast Florida, a pyrates haven. They sailed upstream the morning of the fire, taking advantage of the diversion. They would have made sales at various stops upriver. No duties were paid."

Soon, Edwin's thoughts poured out like ice melting and spilling into a bucket. *So, there could have been another Savannah fire venturer, a smuggler with whom prisoner O'Brien conspired. Both could have prospered by paying the Spanish firebugs. Possibly, he'd be a merchant, whose business was going awry, and a close friend of factor O'Brien.*

He knew the smuggling sailors would not be found. He had a vague recollection of prisoner O'Brien mentioning with whom he was staying after the fire. *Gant, Grant, Gunter....or something like that*, he thought.

He realized if there was another criminal party, the three prisoners would know. He had to determine how to influence them to divulge that person, who would've also needed to have a motive.

Edwin next consulted Mayor Charlton, who was also a judge. He posed the circumstances, which Charlton understood.

"Yes, Edwin, I agree to lighten sentencing from the gallows if the three prisoners confess a co-conspirator, who'd add a fourth to the schemers' group."

Edwin knew that if he tendered this offer, it would be the key to the gate that needed to be open. Thanking the judge, he proceeded at once to the Sheriff's office, then to the gaol. They met with the three who were being forced to bide their time till the next court session.

He told them that the two deaths from the arson burning would be considered a hanging offense. The two Spaniards were also reminded that the attempted murder of himself was still hanging over them.

"If found guilty in a court of law, all of you could face the gallows. Name another local co-conspirator & the judge has promised he will keep the sentence to jail time only at the State Penitentiary with likely no need of a jury trial."

Wide-eyed, they looked at each other and then back at Edwin. O'Brien spoke first.

"Phillip Grant, the dry goods merchant. Formerly of Liverpool. He needed funds to aid his business problems." His voice began to choke. "I don't think..... any of us foresaw the deaths..... that could occur from the fire. I stayed at his home after the fire since it was spared. He was involved in illegal rum smuggling sales up the river the day of the fire, as well as payoffs to the two arsonists. I don't believe his wife has any knowledge of what happened."

The only words from the once rowdy Spaniards were, "Convenir, convenir,"* while nodding their heads in agreement.

Robert Habersham had told Edwin recently

* Spanish: Agree, agree

there'd been rumors that Grant, the dry goods merchant, was heavily in debt, had mismanaged his business, misspent funds and now *consumed cold coffee*.

Now Edwin had witness proof of Grant's involvement, as well as a motive, being rum sales absent any duties paid. Their admission of Grant's involvement also included firm written confessions from all three prisoners.

The next day Edwin proceeded to Grant's store on East Broughton Street, an area spared by the fire, leaving him as the only dry goods store standing. Ironically, that had improved his business.

Entering the store, the counter man greeted him with a smile and asked what he could do for him.

"Are you Phillip Grant ?"

"No, sir, he's in back. In his office."

"Thank you, I'll walk back."

Entering the office, he said, "Mr. Grant ?"

"Yes, and I believe you're our Investigator Willingham ?"

Edwin nodded and took notice that he was mid-thirties, easily six feet tall, broad-shouldered, neatly-trimmed beard and jimber-jawed. He had a noticeable paunch, but was muscular from days of handling goods in the store. At the same time, Edwin contemplated if force would be necessary in arresting him.

He held his barker in a pocket, but decided to try to handle the situation without it, as Grant seemed gentleman-like. He stood, towering above Edwin, offering his hand to shake, which Edwin

returned but considered, *now the time of polite engaging was over.*

"Mr. Grant, I must place you under arrest for conspiring to burn the town, which allowed you to secretly have non-duty paid rum smuggled upstream during the fire, so to be sold. We have arson conspirator and fire starters' confessions implicating you from the three jailed on the charge. Please turn around so I can bind you."

Without commenting and with brute force, he shoved Edwin to the floor and bolted toward the rear of his store and out the back door.

XXII

Capture

A criminal always returns home.

Ljupka Cvetanova

Writer

Edwin, shaken, gathered himself up and gave chase. *Looks like the race is on*, he thought. Heading south on Lincoln Street, he was having to rely on passersby for the runaway's direction. Grant reportedly continued on running, crossed South Broad Street, the town's boundary. Then past the Cemetery, over the old palisades wall toward the Common Area and woods. Edwin figured he may be headed toward Whitebluff Road to go south, irrational and conflicted. *Like a fox on the run*, he figured.

Fifteen minutes into the chase, now thinking Grant had to be out of breath and walking, Edwin slowed to a walk along the north side of the woods. He had no idea where Grant entered them or if he did. They were so thick that one could easily become lost venturing inside. Trekking along west, he discovered the entrance to a lone trail, no doubt taken by Grant. He entered, followed it, but with no sign of the rascal. The only sounds were the birds singing and the clomp of his own boots on the ground.

He's vanished like the morning dew. This manner of tracking is useless, as by now he's hiding somewhere off the trail. May be necessary to return and contact the Sheriff to organize a search posse. Or a better way could be to somehow let him come to me. Know he now plans to depart Savannah but not without some personal items. Might stealthily return to his home tonight. Then, in the darkness, he'll enter his house, gather his belongings and loot and tell his wife of future plans. Then evaporate into the night. Right now, he's definitely on the lam.

Edwin decided to effect a personal stakeout and arrest him using his loaded barker, thinking he would assuredly return in the night. Walking back home and partaking of a meal, he awaited dark. He prepared for what could be a long night, then departed for Grant's home.

Away from the neighborhood lamplight, he positioned himself on a large log near Grant's house. He hoped to spy him upon a reappearance. Nothing intervened on the night except crickets chirping and the moon above. It was peaceful, so he had to struggle to stay awake.

His thoughts began buzzing. *He's a desperate blade. There's no doubt he has a plan in the mill. Hopefully, I can quell it.*

About midnight, he could hear soft shuffling nearby. *This could be it.* But the next moment he felt a hard blow to the back of his head, knocking him off his resting place onto the ground. He was stunned, but knew from whence it came and that

he must react quickly. Grant was a big man and came forward to plunge on top of Edwin, muttering, "You'll never take me."

Edwin rolled over and nimbly jumped to his feet. Grant assumed a fighter's stance. Two immediate left jabs smacked Edwin in the face, followed by a right fist to the head. He fell into the bushes and hit the ground. As he arose, Grant planted a hard blow to the abdomen, buckling Edwin over. Another strong blow put him back on the ground.

This guy can fight. Experienced. If I can land one punch, then I can pile it on in succession. Ignore the pain. Up, Edwin, up, back off, then move in fast.

Without hesitation, he jabbed Grant hard in the face, then elbowed him in the abdomen. A right kick also to the stomach made his opponent gasp and falter. Moving around to his foe's back, Edwin sent a fast knee into it, whereupon Grant howled. A blow to the back of the head, he then backed off a few steps and rammed him, pushing him to the ground, face down. As he tried to rise, Edwin slammed both fists into his head, placing him on the ground again. He now lay unmoved.

In tying Grant's hands behind him, he ordered, "Lie still, or next you'll feel the barker against your head."

After resting a moment, he tied a tether rope around Grant's neck and bade him stand and walk ahead toward the gaol.

"If you try to run away, the cord inside your collar will tighten. And my gun is in my hand."

He glanced at the big man, now walking ahead. and allowed himself a buoyant reverie--
a sense of complete accomplishment enveloped...my spirit is soaring.... as all my training and experience has come forth. He may not be a dancing bear.... yet like the bear finally caught in the trap. With only the lamplights' illuminations, they marched toward the county gaol, where the jailer was awakened.

Then came probably the best night's sleep he'd had in months. He felt like the legendary *Rip Van Winkle* upon awakening at mid-morning next. Lying there, he was comforted knowing he'd earned his keep and satisfied his inquisitive mind.

That day the Mayor asked him to attend the next Town Council meeting so they could express appreciation for all his work in solving the arson case and arresting everyone involved.

"You are persistent and successful and we want to applaud you," articulated Mayor Charlton.

Edwin decided he would not miss that meeting for sure, though he would still be sore from the fight.

This day, he relished his next planned visit to Susannah's.

XXIII

Yellow Jacket

*Thus fear of danger is ten thousand times
more terrifying than danger itself.*

Robinson Crusoe
Daniel Defoe 1700

One morning in July, Edwin awoke with a high fever. He felt weak all day and took to his bed. River Pilot Caleb soon became aware that he hadn't seen him in several days, so he went to see Sheriff D'lyon. He was told that Edwin had the Yellow Jacket fever. They began alternating days taking him food and checking on him at his doorway.

Sadly, by June, 1820, this terrible malady had descended on Savannah. It began with fever and a malaise. If the stricken began to turn yellow, hiccup, vomit black, shiver, suffer high fever, thirst, headaches, leg and back pain, dizziness and nightmares, a dread would descend on their family, as death was near. It was only the coastal towns that had occasional epidemics.

They all feared Yellow Fever, which locals termed Yellow Jacket. Savannah physicians were hesitant to term it anything at the onset. Many residents contracted it, so the only avoidance solution for the healthy was to leave town, as there was no cure. It had happened in previous years. The mortality rate in years past was known to go

as high as fifty percent, but only in severely affected neighborhoods, as that of the Irish laborers.

Recent immigrants, for some reason, unknown, were more apt to contract it. Low death rates existed, however, for Negroes and children, the reasons again being unknown. Washington Ward, the city's most northeastern ward, became stigmatized for having somehow a high percentage of the malady. The reason again was undetermined.

As it was thought to be contagious, friends would only nod to each other on the street and forego the favorable custom of shaking hands. Susannah's family rented a house in Pendleton, South Carolina, in July to avoid contraction. Located in the northwest South Carolina mountain foothills, it was already a popular summer retreat for coastal families of means. Others went to the mountains of north Georgia for the same reason. Those remaining huddled together at home.

The Georgian Newspaper reported that eventually two-thirds of the population left Savannah, going far away from the coast till autumn. Mayor Charlton had recommended in the paper to leave the confines of the city if possible till cooler weather when the striking slowed. The stage trip was arduous, though some went a more costly way by steamship, at least as far as it could go. They longed for the coming of the railroad. Edwin had stayed in town, for as a constable, he felt duty-bound.

Before he contracted the fever, he often

attended Town council meetings, so to stay informed, often sitting next to newspaper editor John Harney. At one meeting, Dr William Waring, physician and Alderman, waited his turn, then stood to comment, leaning on his cane.

"I've been tracking those infected by the Jacket, trying to see if there's a common element. As a coastal city with seasonal warm weather, the night air miasma, or noxious vapor, we know, is the probable culprit. It derives from swamps and nearby marshes, so I recommend no new or even existing close-by rice plantations. The marshes and their rice fields surround our town on three sides. The combination of it all may very well be the cause. I know the Council considered this several years ago, but it still looms large."

Everyone in town questioned the cause--- animals, insects, food or sailors bringing it to port. They were so aware of the periodic dissolute epidemics for which there was no cure--Typhoid, Scarlet Fever, Consumption and others. It was a fact of life that existed. Smallpox, a horrible scourge, was slowly being routed, as a vaccine had been developed for inoculations. It had taken many lives world-wide in the past.

Tar and pitch barrels were placed at night in the squares with hopes that the smoke produced would dissipate the *bad air* of the nearby marshes. Treatments of the times, such as bleeding, purging, Laudanum, hot baths, mercurial diuretics or mustard-plasters did no help. Only a very healthy body and mind would effect

survival should one be infected. Physicians finally acknowledged that it was Yellow Fever. Up and down the eastern sides of Georgia and South Carolina came to be known as the Malarial Coast.

Each Alderman sought volunteers in their assigned districts, so to make daily rounds, advise physicians and try to aid the afflicted without being affected themselves. The waterfront area was not even attended. It was considered too deadly. Daily, the newspaper would provide an updated report for the number succumbing.

It was a time of much despair with eminent Dr. W.C. Daniell's hospital taking in many victims. Some survived and many didn't. A large number of the poor and helpless victims wound up at Savannah's Poor House and City Hospital*, located to the south beyond the city's boundary. Though all nursing was performed by men, the administrator with her nurse-like demeanor, was Lucinda Legare.

She welcomed all with her sympathetic heart. Her personal goal was to keep all patients as comfortable as possible, though she witnessed many deaths. Since family was not allowed in to see their sick member, she took it upon herself to visit homes and advise of passing's. The city often paid for funerals and burials.

She once told Mayor Charlton, "If truth be told, I may contract and die from the Jacket, but I'm here as long as it takes for our people."

This was the same philosophy espoused by Dr. Mary Lavinder, Savannah's only female doctor,

* eventually became Candler Hospital

who ministered to so many during the epidemic.

" 'Tis the age in which we live. It's like a giant boulder in the harbor that can't be moved," quoted Dr. Lemuel Kollock, another long-term beloved doctor. "We do have effective Smallpox vaccinations now. I'm hoping the day will come when a good anesthetic is developed to allow major surgeries. Of course, a cure and vaccine for this terrible current disease is much needed."

Edwin continued to suffer not only physical discomfort, but also emotional angst, as a wooden ox cart creaked by daily. The county's driver, Bull Greer, called out to pick up the dead that would be delivered to the Old Cemetery. His job next was the burials, often without a service. That would soon include two of the local physicians. Greer was known for his long gray beard, which he often used as a wipe cloth.

Edwin knew that should his skin turned yellow, if he vomited black and suffered other strong symptoms, it would become terminal. He would die in eight to ten hours, so it was scary, every day.

He was so fatigued. *Oh, for an elixir for my lethargy. Purgatives don't help....and I'm not going in for bloodletting.....it sped the death of Washington. I almost want to try the Rattlesnake Oil Liniment, but I know it's quackery...my head feels like a cannon ball..must wait it out.* He would fall asleep in the middle of the day, *thinking a tonic, a tonic....*

Each day, Caleb or Sheriff D'lyon would leave food on his front porch and knock several times, then leave. He would rise up, stagger or sometimes even crawl to the door to obtain his food. Often, he would just sit on the floor and consume it there. Then he would stumble back to bed, thinking, *I'm fortunate to have friends.*

Savannah was quieter with less active commerce, as so many were going elsewhere till fall. At times it felt like an abandoned town, which was the fate of Frederica, Georgia, Oglethorpe's outpost to the south. In the last century, it ceased to exist after British military support withdrew.

His symptoms subsided after two weeks, though he continued sluggish for awhile. He could return to work for which he was so thankful. He knew he needed to write Susannah to apologize for letter delays.

He had just read the following ad for river travel-

THE GEORGIAN

August 1 , 1820

For Augusta, Ga., the well-known steamboat LADY JANE, Mills Jacobson Captain, will dispatch without delay August 10 for freight or passage, with excellent accommodations for passengers. For embarkation arrangements, see the Captain.

R. K. JORDAN & CO.

Interestingly, it was right next to a typical small ad.....

Dr. Robertson's Infallible
Worm Destroying Lozenges
For those that infest the human body.

He decided it was now time to write Susannah in Pendleton, South Carolina.

August 1, 1820

Miss Susannah Jennings

Pendleton, SC

My Dearly Beloved,

Forgive my delay in writing to you, as I somehow contracted the Yellow Jacket. It left me feverish and weak for a fortnight. No energy or equilibrium to do much of anything. My friends, Caleb Chisolm and Sheriff D'Lyon, have looked in on me and brought food. Now I'm recovered and ready again to conduct myself as your adoring suitor.

As my composure and clear-headedness returned after two weeks, I'm more aware of missing your

lovely face and sweet disposition.
And, yes, I can't wait to hold you to
me and kiss your delicate lips.

I want to steal you away to a cool,
shady spot under a moss-covered oak
and enjoy your company. I awake
each morning with a yearning to be
with you.

So glad you and your family can
remain safe till the affliction leaves
us. We hope that will happen this
fall. I'd like to visit there in about
two weeks. I would dispatch on
August 10th on the steamboat to
Augusta.

Then I'd proceed overland by
prearranged stage to Pendleton,
arriving late on the 14th. Please
write and let me know if it's
acceptable to your family. I've never
been to that area of the Carolinas
but have heard nothing but good of
its surroundings and healthy

location.

I send to you my deepest love and
eagerly await seeing you so I may
demonstrate my affection. Till then,
I'm your most devoted with deepest
love,

Edwin

XXIV

Steamboating

Who hears the rippling of rivers will not utterly despair of anything.

Henry David Thoreau

Steamboating in 19th century America captured the imagination of Americans as they loved the astonishing speed of 5 mph as boats moved through the water gracefully. Its popularity created a new industry for freight and passenger transportation, and Robert Fulton was a national hero for perfecting it.

A more comfortable type of transportation than bone-rattling stagecoaches, but lower deck passengers had to bring their own food, sleep outside and bear up to oft-times dirty and smelly conditions. Upper deck passengers enjoyed a personal cabin, dining room service, good cuisine and gaming tables. They could easily lounge outside their room on the deck and observe the river. The cost, of course, was two times that of the lower deck.

Edwin, after receiving a *please come* note from Susannah, signed up for the wooden sternwheeler LADY JANE, 125' long with a 25' foot beam and a 5' draft. It had two smokestacks, burned wood and coal for steam power and had no masts.

The day of dispatch upriver north to Augusta, Georgia, arrived with a small amount of freight already loaded and about twenty passengers

waiting at first light to board. With a crew of twenty also, the Captain, though a ruddy-faced sourdough, was quite experienced.

"All aboard !" he announced "We're fixin' to go. We cast off in about twenty minutes! We make about ten hours per day with two stops for the night!"

Edwin settled in his upper deck cabin and strolled to the outside deck. He heard the starting whistle, the engine roaring and the paddlewheel sloshing. Savannah soon disappeared behind them as did the last of the rice fields as they ascended the river.

LADY JANE was going back to its permanent wharf in Augusta, Georgia, with the boat now much lighter. It had delivered a multitude of goods from plantations upriver. Edwin knew that Augusta was the head of navigation, as rapids above it prevented further travel.

They began to skirt Georgia plantations on the west side of the river. Wharves appeared for The Hermitage, Mulberry Grove, Coleraine and Royal Vale and riverside workers would often shout and wave. It was both exciting and relaxing as he thought of the mighty Savannah River's sources, far above in the mountains. Many tributaries added to its volume along the 300 mile route, so that it became a major stream in the southeast.

He began to consider. *It is so strong but so peaceful that floating along you can really observe and enjoy it, almost trance – like. Plants, trees, birds, turtles and other animals add so much*

to the scene. Edwin had heard of the Sturgeon, the Neanderthal water-borne fish, that could leap high into the air. Boney-plated, they could grow up to twenty feet, three thousand pounds and live up to fifty years. It was told of men in small boats being battered by one leaping into the boat, making him glad he was on a large boat.

Another top deck passenger sauntered over and sat next to Edwin. Smiling, he introduced himself and inquired if he wanted company.

"Why, certainly. I've been looking for someone to chat with on this pleasant trip." After his own introduction, Edwin asked for his thoughts on steamboating.

"This is my first steamboat trip," said his neighbor, introduced as Robert Whiting. So I'm hesitant to bring it up, but I understand that this is the time of year for low water. And I hear that the possibilities of hitting or grounding on snags and sandbars is greater. I've also suffered through stories of boiler explosions, ship burnings and many folks being killed. I know we are headed upstream against the current, so that may give the Captain an advantage in steering. Do you have any experience on a steamboat?"

Edwin volunteered, "Robert, I've steamboated some around Beaufort but never on the Savannah River. I've never experienced a problem. I think we just have to trust our experienced Captain. Should we have a boiler explosion, I'd move to jump into the water and swim away as needed."

That seemed to calm his new friend to some

extent, but he could tell that Mr. Whiting was still apprehensive. He tried to change the subject.

"If you want a treat, watch for Sturgeons leaping out of the water unexpectedly. They are most unusual fish and create quite a scene, being so large."

The second day aboard was like the first with the peaceful scenery being the same, which allowed a gazer to be virtually mesmerized. Of course, Edwin mesmerized himself with anticipation of seeing Susannah.

A short while after the mid-day repast serving, the boat jolted everyone as it came to an abrupt stop. The paddlewheel then began to slosh first backwards, then forward with loud creaks of the boat scraping something below.

One of the crew rushed into the upper deck dining area and announced, "We've lodged onto a big snag underwater, but have no fear! The Captain's working to remove us."

Needless to say, the passengers became anxious of what could happen. A lady diner was heard to express, "Oh mercy me !" A look of terror was on her face.

A man vocalized, "How long ?!" This was accompanied by raising his arms into the air.

Edwin looked across the room to new friend Robert Whiting, who winced at the announcement, appearing as if he'd just been sentenced to jail. *Poor souls*, thought Edwin, *this could be resolved in minutes.*

He headed toward the steps down to the lower deck and motioned to Whiting to come along. He followed like a puppy responding to his master's call. The paddlewheel's grindings now caused vibrations in the hull, adding to the passengers' already alarmed emotions. Even balancing to walk took effort.

The crew below was now in a flurry as the boat had begun tipping on its side. Even Edwin now had some concern. Looking around, he saw a stack of the brand new cork and wood floatable cushions. He took one and gave one to Whiting.

"Will we need this ?!" Whiting frantically asked.

"I don't know, Robert, but let's be ready." Slowly, as they watched, the mishap caused the big steamboat to tip so much that an edge was partially in the water. Anything not secured was sliding toward the tipped side with some objects going into the water. It was necessary for anyone on deck to grab onto something firm to keep from dropping into the water also.

Pandemonium then broke out with women screaming and the crew yelling for all to grab a cushion. It became bedlam, as so many had descended to the lower deck seeking help. For the most part, the women could not swim, which added to the distress. Thankfully, there were no children aboard. It was now obvious that the boat was not to be motored off the snag. It had rolled at such an angle that some went into the water, helplessly or of their own volition.

"Forget your gear! We're going in," Edwin yelled to Whiting. With a horror-stricken stare at the water, he edged toward Edwin, ignorant of what was coming next.

"We just passed the wharf of Bull Pond Plantation on the Carolina side, so we can float down to it."

Easing into the water, which was warm, he waved Whiting on in. He followed, as an obedient child, clinging to his cushion. Others did also. But some continued to stay on the boat, fearful of the river.

Edwin thought, *this scene has an air of adventure, I'm inspired by it. I feel no sense of danger. Just the opposite.* But he kept the thoughts from Mr. Whiting.

The Captain, abandoning his station to the lower deck, bore no signs of being unsettled. He made remarks for all by standing on a deck table, though it was tottering.

"I know of a sister ship that should be coming along any minute. It will transfer us. No need to fret. We'll be fine." Judging by the hysteria around him, it seemed as if no one was listening.

He continued, louder, "It's doubtful our boat will completely sink! It's gonna take a tugboat to recover it and Augusta has one! When the tugboat comes later, they can recover our gear! "

About fifteen minutes later, a whistle was heard and the steamboat INDEPENDENCE was sighted coming upstream. Cheers rang out from those still hanging panic-struck onto the boat. A

few had to be coaxed into the water and with assistance made it to the waiting steamboat.

Long poles helped to bring some to the rescue boat. Their crew had plucked up passengers floating loosely in the water, many holding onto cushions. Rope ladders along the side provided the access. A few had been taken as well from their perch on the Bull Pond Plantation wharf, including Edwin and Robert. A complete total of 40 were rescued, with no injuries or loss of life.

The INDEPENDENCE crew and passengers alike were quite hospitable, offering dry clothes and private cabins in which to change. Hot tea and coffee was offered all around for those so desiring. The vacant cabins were made available for the rest of the trip, free of charge, for as many as could be accommodated. Food was rationed so that all could be fed.

The hapless rescued Captain would have to reimburse the rescuing Captain. His company would have marine insurance. The remainder of the trip was without incident and the crewmen were thanked by the ones recovered, often with hugs. The LADY JANE's passengers now had an adventure they could share with their families.

Upon arriving at an Augusta wharf the next day and debarking for their homes or lodging, all were relieved to again be on dry land. Saying goodbye to Augusta native Robert Whiting, Edwin headed straight to an inn for the night.

At breakfast in the inn where Edwin stayed, it became known that the LADY JANE's Captain

had good knowledge of the rescuing INDEPENDENCE steamboat behind them. He and the other captain were in an unannounced race for a wager. This had become a common practice, unknown by most passengers. When this was circulated, many were furious, thinking the Captain had not been careful, focusing too much on his little venture.

The next morning, he boarded the stagecoach east to Abbeville, South Carolina. There would be one ferry crossing over the river from Georgia to South Carolina.

From Abbeville, he'd be on another stage north to Pendleton, where Susannah and her family were staying. It would be an arduous ten hours each day with one overnight stop and a change of the four horses.

The company on each stage was satisfactory, with most dozing during the trip until an unusual bump awakened them. *The driver seemed a little tipsy after our stop at a tavern for dinner*, thought Edwin. *He may have overindulged in ale, but so far it hasn't affected his handling.* Turned out that the stagecoach company also owned the inn in which they'd be staying in Abbeville. There were a few small creeks to ford on the last leg to Pendleton, but they were handled well.

Edwin began to feel like a little boy on Christmas Eve anticipating Santa. He was going to see Susannah and he couldn't wait. Thoughts of her floated through his mind the whole trip. He

also continued to revel in the fact that his main mission in Savannah was accomplished. *More small investigations will arise before my time is up, but now I can concentrate more on my future, a wedding and Susannah. Hallelujah.*

Halcyon Days

*The very name of Pendleton became a synonym
for refined and beautiful women and for elegant and
chivalrous gentlemen.*

Low Country Planters
Summer Homes
R.W. Simpson

Arriving at Pendleton about six in the evening, August 13, Edwin climbed out and felt like a bear exiting from winter's hibernation. He was stiff and laden with fatigue, but his eagerness to see Susannah offset his discomfort. Taking his reacquired luggage down and receiving directions, he began walking a few blocks to the Jennings house in town. Approaching the courtyard gate, he stopped abruptly. A stylishly attired young man was on the porch with Susannah. His heart almost stopped.

For a few timeless moments he stood there, heart thudding like a drum. He strived to control a series of rising emotions, picturing various circumstances.

Hmm...not the reception I envisioned...Think Edwin, you can't rush up and demand an explanation as if you were arresting someone. Deep breaths, relax and smile before you climb the steps, even if you're faking it. There's gotta be an explanation. There better be.

"Good afternoon ! " he shouted, approaching the steps with a big smile.

"Edwin ! You're here!" She hurried down the steps and threw her arms around him as he dropped his bag. She didn't want to let go. "Thank God you're over the Jacket. I was so worried. You look quite healthy. So glad you recovered. Come up and meet my childhood friend from summers here."

Losing his smile, he slowly stepped up.

"Edwin, this is Jay Pinckney from Charleston. He's only here for three days and is returning tomorrow. Pendleton's too quiet for him."

"Great to meet you, my good man. Susannah hasn't stopped talking about you since I came by. Betrothed! I'm so happy for both of you," he said, while casting eyes and a smile from one to the other.

"Thank you," said Edwin, feeling a sense of relief spreading over his mind and body. *You idiot, what did you expect?*

"Will you be here long?" inquired Pinckney.

"Hopefully, a week to ten days if Mrs. Jennings doesn't route me out." He smiled. "I look forward to seeing this unique town I've heard so much about."

"Well, I'm going to take my leave and let you two be together. 'Tis about supper time and Mama has a family meal planned for my departure to Charleston tomorrow."

Goodbyes were said and Susannah invited Edwin into the house where he was welcomed by the Jennings. Still proudly wearing his new Homberg hat, he doffed it completely to the Jennings.

"For a moment or two when I first arrived, I thought I might need to pull out my barker, so to protect my interests. But Susannah quickly squelched that with introductions."

That brought a round of laughter from all, as she softly punched him in the stomach while giving him a smug look.

"Your room is upstairs, so Susannah, why don't you show him which one. Then come back down and help me prepare for supper," voiced Mrs. Jennings. "Edwin, go up and unpack, freshen up, then come down for a bountiful meal. I know you're tired, so we want to nourish you."

Susannah led him upstairs to the bedroom her mother had prepared. Glancing down the hall, she took his hand and pulled him inside. They stole a quick kiss before anyone else emerged upstairs.

"You do realize that my being in your room is quite taboo?" She said with a playful grin.

"Yes, I'm aware that you shouldn't be in the bedroom of your betrothed," he acknowledged with a likewise grin. "But, for the moment, let's take advantage of it," as he lifted her lips to his.

Feeling exhilarated and lightheaded, she told Edwin, "Go ahead and unpack, then return downstairs before we're discovered," as she hugged him before leaving the room. At supper, the usual Jennings conviviality was enjoyed by all, especially by Edwin.

Susannah expressed that she should have mentioned Jay Pinckney previously. "We played together with the other kids in the summertime, so

it's just a friendship thing. He's nowhere near my type anyway. Thinks he's a Don Juan with the ladies. He can't wait to return to Charleston and the social scene."

She continued, "I so look forward to our time in Pendleton, away from whatever sad drama is taking place in Savannah."

"Yes, the Jacket is taking a lot of folks," Edwin spoke while shaking his head. He informed them of several Jennings' friends that had passed recently.

"I hope it will have subsided in a month or so. By the way, where's brother Trevor?" He raised one arm a little with palm open to himself, as a questioning gesture.

"He spends his days wandering the woods and streams in the area, of course with his rifle and with permission. Sometimes alone, sometimes with friends. He's in Heaven. Will probably show up for a late supper." She smiled, then shook her head slightly.

After the evening meal, the couple took a leisurely stroll around the neighborhood in the waning light, till they decided that Edwin was soon ready to drop off to sleep after his travels. He thought to wait till later to replay the boat incident. He didn't want to surrender the blissful mood they enjoyed. But he didn't wait till the morrow to take her aside for embracing.

Finding a quiet nook under a rose arbor, he took her into his arms for a lingering kiss, which had been long coming. "I love you, Susannah

Jennings. I couldn't wait to arrive here."

"You know my love for you too, Edwin. I have been so anxiously awaiting your arrival."

Oversleeping the next morning and feeling refreshed, he bounded down the stairs for some coffee, bread and fruit.

"Ahh, it feels good to be here in the mountain air. I feel invigorated," he announced. Greeting all, he noticed several items of baggage, a valise and several traveling bags near the front door.

"They're mine," said Mr. Jennings. "Don't wanna leave with the Jacket in Savannah, but the Custom House needs me. I've had a great time here. Edwin, stay as long as you want and enjoy this quaint town."

"That sounds good. Before you go, do you have time to tell me a little of Pendleton's history?"

"Yes. Well.....for a small village, it's been quite active so far and it's just 1820. A few influential men have lived in the area, including famous U.S. Senator John Calhoun and Revolutionary Militia General and Congressman Andrew Pickens. A lot of its political influence also comes from the wealthy planters that visit in the summer. You'll enjoy admiring their homes.

"Let's see, we're at just under 1,000 feet elevation, so that helps to keep it cool. A remnant of the Cherokee Indians are still located north of here in the higher mountains, but I don't think they're a problem. The Keowee River is just west of us and is good for fishing, but too many rapids for boats."

"Lest I forget, we're well above the rivers' Fall Line, as they call it. We call it the gnat line, as they are absent this far north, as are the skeeters. Low Country families come here in the summer for several months to try to escape the bugs and the heat, to say nothing of the various fevers the coastal towns produce."

Soon, Mr. Jennings left to catch his stage and Edwin turned to Susannah. "Up here, I feel free as a bird. What adventures do you have planned for us?"

She only had to give it brief thought and said, "A picnic, at a beautiful pond nearby?"

"I'm ready," he responded, with a gleam in his eye.

The days that passed were some of the happiest that the couple had ever enjoyed. Euphoria abounded from more picnics, sightseeing, hiking, pond boating, meeting other young people up for the summer and even attending a few casual parties. Not the silk and lace Savannah - type parties, but more relaxed affairs, usually with no music present but sometimes with small amounts of wine served. Edwin thought the foothills air was intoxicating.

One evening, with the fragrance of Magnolia blossoms spilling into the air, Susannah called her Mom out to the porch.

"Edwin has a tale to relate of his steamboat trip and wanted you to hear it also." As they listened, gripped by his words, it seemed as if he had been in another world.

"Were you ever terrified when it appeared that the steamboat was about to sink ?" expressed Mrs. Jennings, feeling distress for what he went through.

"Not really, as having gone through other challenging situations, I've learned there's always a solution. But you have to keep your wits about you. A flowing stream can almost always take you to a place of safety."

"Mama, do you see one of the reasons I admire him so much ? He can always handle whatever comes along."

Chuckling, Edwin countered, "Hmm, I'm certain there'll be times when I'll need your help."

"Yes, right after you teach me to swim," Susannah replied.

"You know," admitted Edwin one day, "I've just now noticed that your mother hasn't been concerned about chaperoning us."

"Oh, I know. She trusts us and thinks as though we're only one step from the altar."

"Susannah, I wish we were *at* the altar," bringing a big smile to both. "By the way, I've been looking through your mother's new Webster's dictionary. You know I'm a word hound."

" Oh, yes," she said.

"I've learned one new word- salubrious and one new quote-Halcyon Days."

"Okay, tell me."

"The atmosphere here is salubrious-healthy ! And Halcyon Days is what we've had the last

week and a half--the happiest ever!"

"I wholeheartedly agree. And when we return, I'd love for us to take a day trip out to Tybee beach, maybe with a group. I think you'd love it."

"Sounds good," he responded.

The day before he was to climb aboard the stagecoach for home was special. Bells were ringing at all the churches as well at the courthouse at dawn. It was the mid-summer festival that came before the days and evenings of harvest. All stores and warehouses would be closed.

There would be a big parade, horse-drawn floats with decorations and a band playing. Edwin walked Susannah and Mrs. Jennings downtown to immerse in it all. The mayor led the parade, riding in his decorated carriage till he arrived at the courthouse square to take a seat in the bleachers.

After the parade, there were militia drills, musical groups singing and orations. Toasts were made to notables, such as Washington, Jefferson, President Monroe and South Carolina Governor Bennett. A cannon would fire with each. Food booths were in abundance and homemade goodies galore.

"Truly a great day," spoke Edwin. "I don't think Savannah could have done it any better ! Pendleton is an absolute oasis!"

That evening, alighted on the porch in the moonlight, Edwin spoke favorably to Susannah of her parents.

" Edwin, I look forward to meeting your mother too, whom I'm positive is a dear. But why is it you've never talked of your father?"

He looked at her in a thoughtful manner. "I really have nothing to tell, as I was not over a year old when he died. I've always felt that it is a missing part of my life, of which I just accept. I've been told he was an admirable person and was quite likeable. I'm not sure what caused his death at such a young age, in his late twenties. Probably some feverish malady. My stepfather, Mr. Jaudon, has been a fine influence on me and I'm thankful."

It was painful, saying goodbye the next morning. Susannah walked with Edwin to the stagecoach's appointed time and they made pleasant small talk until the *all aboard* was announced. A long embrace ensued and a few tears fell.

"See you soon, darling. Love you," as he climbed aboard, forcing a smile. She couldn't speak, but nodded several times and threw him a kiss. They continued waving till the coach was out of sight.

Immigrant Friends and Foe

Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.
Colossians 3:19

Edwin was aware that an expected immigrant ship from London with friends was to dock soon, so he walked down to riverside to wait. He tried to picture how his own father must have felt when he arrived from England in the late 18th century. He could relate somewhat, as he'd survived voyages to England and then back 3 years earlier. Almost all the ships with a large number of passengers were packet cargo sailing ships. Unless you could afford one of the few private cabins, you were in steerage. That meant crowded quarters that were dark and damp.

It just so happened that he'd received a letter from an old Cambridge University classmate who'd acquired his home address from the London police force. Edwin's mother in Beaufort District assisted the post office in re-directing it. John Harris was coming with wife Olivia and toddler son, John, Jr. He'd graduated from law school and was now ready to go into practice in America. Corresponding back, Edwin planned to meet his ship and looked forward to the welcoming.

The early days of autumn had arrived in September and Yellow Jacket still continued to

claim lives. Edwin hoped it was peaking. The vessel's eager arrivals likely had no knowledge.

While waiting, he sat and observed the big warehouses, some five stories high, all awaiting cotton bales from upstream after harvest. It would be stored and later shipped out. The load-bearing bricks and stones, many covered with plaster, were magnificent and loomed up solid and secure. *What a tribute to the cotton industry, he thought. I hope to have an office of my own up top on Factors Row someday.*

It was a fine day to sit and watch waterfront activity and to hear and observe seagulls rising and diving. The unique sound of a nearby small steam-driven sawmill, buzzing away for the shipbuilders, was comforting. The din of activity from the dockworkers was quite noticeable.

The big ship soon arrived from London, England's busiest port. Many eager individuals were waving from the deck. Some were returning home from visiting the old country, but many were immigrants. It was plain to see, they were charged with hope and expectations, as their elation was apparent. Edwin pictured them thinking they had found the rainbow with the legendary pot of gold at the bottom.

They could be artisans, laborers or even landed gentry, who were monetarily able and ready to open businesses or acquire plantations. Landing was completed, planks were laid and the arrivals hurried forward to feel dry land. Edwin, along with others, greeted each one while he was looking for John.

Indentured servants also arrived and would either be sought by their contract purchasers or bid on with an agent for the shipper. The non-indentured, including families, would seek a place to stay temporarily. Lodging taverns or inns would be available unless they had family or friends that could house them. Edwin hoped to induce the Harris family to stay with him awhile. Soon they appeared and Edwin warmly received them. Harris then introduced wife Olivia and John, Jr.

"So happy you're here and especially glad you survived the voyage," spoke Edwin.

"Survived would be a good word." voiced John, smiling, "It's a journey full of surprises. By good fortune, we had a private cabin."

"I own a home now, so I want you to lodge with me for a time till you get your bearings."

"What will your wife say?" inquired Olivia, her toddler straining her arm to run around.

"Not married yet. Betrothed, with wedding in December... I think," Edwin said, while producing a doubtful smile. That provided a few soft laughs.

"We'll be happy to stay with you then," responded Olivia, turning to John as she spoke.

"Good. I have a hack standing by to drive us with all your luggage, for whenever you're ready."

"Give us a little time to get all our gear together, if that's okay," spoke John.

"Certainly," countered Edwin.

While waiting off to the side, Edwin spotted a slightly familiar but not very friendly face disembarking. It made him think of several of his

London arrestees that were considerably mean-spirited. The same person walked over to Edwin. He was about Edwin's size, maybe ten year's older and his garb was old and dirty. With a three day beard and a cracked front tooth, he had a surly look as he spoke.

"You don't remember me, do you ?"

Edwin paused before responding. "No. You're somewhat familiar, but I can't recall. My name is Edwin Willingham."

"Oh, I know who you are. You were one of London's Bow Street Runners Constables that arrested me, which led to a two year sentence in jail. And, believe me, a London jail is like a dungeon."

With a scowl, he stated, "My name is Rudd Bailey of London's Bermondsey slum area. You arrested me on a weak charge. While jailed, I lost my wife and assets and am now penniless. Due to overcrowding, the court encouraged me to emigrate after one year, provided I came as an indentured servant. My voyage fee is being paid by a contract purchaser, a Mr. McAlpin of the Hermitage Plantation."

"Ah, yes, I remember now. You were convicted of aggravated assault for beating your wife and the neighbor who tried to intervene. I believe it was your fourth arrest for breaking the new English law." They both stood, motionless and speechless, eyeing each other.

Edwin spoke, "Well, I hope your stay here is fruitful."

"Only if it's unfruitful for you, " Bailey uttered, almost growling.

"To let you know, I'm a Constable in Savannah now, with arrest authority." Bailey said no more and walked away. *He's seething*, thought Edwin. He began clearing his throat, as if subconsciously disturbed.

Motioning to the hack driver, they loaded up and rode to his home on East State Street with the Harris's. Going in, he left them alone to become settled.

"Make your self at home and utilize whatever you need, including any food you see."

"What a beautiful town," expressed Olivia later, "in spite of the fire that I understand took so many homes."

"That's the reason I'm here," Edwin voiced, "but I'll explain it all later."

Recalling the riverfront conversation, Edwin got the impression that his former arrestee Bailey desired revenge. *At arrest and at court time, he was irrational, temper-prone and obsessive. Needed to be jailed. Can imagine him now festering and planning some devious act against me. At least he'll be restricted on the plantation several miles away, but this doesn't augur well. I guess revenge derives from cultures through the ages. Clans and tribes in Europe always seemed to be driven by the urge to retaliate. Jesus' Gospel has always taught us to avoid such measures. It certainly would make life more peaceful.*

Later, he mentioned the encounter to Sheriff D'Lyon and Deputy Johnson.

"Well, if he comes to town and causes any disturbances, we'll put him in the stocks," said the Sheriff. He followed up the comment via a spat like an arrow towards its target, the spittoon.

Edwin had envisioned Bailey as an alligator, perched on the river bank, waiting to attack anything that came by. But, soon he began to forget about him, as more pressing matters filled his head.

After a couple of days, he introduced the Harris's to Susannah, who had returned from Pendleton, South Carolina, with her mother. She quickly developed a congenial friendship with Olivia.

Susannah related, "Whenever you're ready, I want to show you around town and introduce you to my friends. If you enjoy reading, I'd like for you to visit my book club. Right now we're concluding discussing *Mansfield Park* by Jane Austen. It's a delightful group. You might also enjoy the company of friends that meet once a week for tea."

Olivia was gratified by Susannah's hospitality.

John, restless and ready to seek employment, asked Edwin for recommendations, even though he was aware of several firms. Edwin was happy to do so, as John was intelligent, well-attired and articulate. He had graduated from Cambridge's Law School, one of the oldest and most admired in the world. In addition, he had references from law

professors, along with one from a judge for whom he had performed clerk duties.

Edwin made up a list of five firms for John to visit and also prepared a letter of recommendation from himself, as he was now well-established in Savannah. John received offers from each and with Edwin's help, made his best choice. Everyone was pleased, as he would start on the following Monday.

A few weeks later, on a night while Edwin was up late reading, he noticed what appeared to be a fire outside at the back door. Rushing to the rear and opening the door, a flame shot up from the siding nearby. With speed, he went inside, grabbed up his filled wash basin and doused the fire at once. Going back inside, he picked up his large water jug and emptied it also. Anything holding water was poured on the small blaze.

When the blaze was contained, he sat and wondered of the source. *This was not an accident. Someone set it. Rudd Bailey, the recent angry immigrant, could be suspect. Of course, he's nowhere in sight now.* Without mentioning the episode to Susannah or the Harris', he did recount it the next day to the Sheriff and Deputy.

"Tell you what, Mr. Willingham," offered Deputy Shed, "Lemme have a go at it. I'll stake out-cha house from the bushes in the dark, say, a few hours after sundown fer a few nites. If he comes back, I'll git'em. He'll have to walk in three miles from the plantation after dark, so that'll

take'em awhile. I'll plan in-acawdunce." He lifted one arm with a balled fist for determination.

"I'd be grateful, Shed, as he's quite an unsavory character." *Shed's a funny character, I know, but he does have a big heart and I can always count on him.*

The Harris' were then told of the circumstances and advised not to worry, just to stay out of sight should something occur. John was aware of Edwin's police credentials. The first few nights, Shed hid out back and out of sight. Nothing happened. The third night, trying to stay awake, Shed could make out a figure easing over to the rear of Edwin's home.

He bent down at the wooden stairs, placed pieces of wood and kindling and lit a fire from flint and steel. He tended it for some time so a flame would rise up, which it did. As he stood and watched, the small fire gained strength.

Shed emerged, shouting, "Put that fire out or I'll plug you right now !"

Startled, the arsonist took off running. He didn't get far as Shed ran, tackled him, then rose up with his musket and slammed the rascal in the jaw. Aiming his musket directly, he made the igniter put out the fire, using his jacket, as needed.

With his gun still aimed, Shed used his elbow to knock on the door for Edwin. He soon exited with a lamp, wearing his nightclothes and identified Rudd Bailey.

"Bailey, are you a lunatic?! I told you I was a Constable, as is Deputy Johnson here. You'll now

pay for this crime and you may have more time added to your indentured service! You've got to put the past behind you!"

Bailey's response was to spit in Edwin's direction. Shed bound him and hauled him off, musket at the ready.

The next morning, arriving at the Sheriff's office, the first thing that caught Edwin's eye was Bailey in the adjacent stocks. He looked pitiful. No comment was made by either. He would be there for several days as a mild punishment.

"I won't be surprised," said the Sheriff, "that after we turn him loose, the plantation owner gives him a good whipping, which he probably deserves. If he try's something again, he'll be locked up to await trial."

"I'm certainly grateful for Shed's work," said Edwin, looking over at him. "I owe you a steak," he tendered, smiling and extending his hand.

"Bailey's an on'ry cuss, thas fer sure," Shed declared, "but we can't let enythin happen to the bridegroom's home at 542 E. State St.!" He then gave Edwin a friendly slap on the back.

After a few weeks, the Harris' deemed it time for them to move into their own quarters. Leasing a small townhouse on East Congress Street, they purchased basic furniture as a prelude to moving in. Susannah was more than happy to help Olivia with plans for decorating and furniture placement. "It gives me practice, for after my upcoming

wedding, I'll be moving into Edwin's house," she exclaimed with pleasure.

The evening prior to moving, Olivia and Susannah prepared a grand meal with delight. On this day they had help and they utilized the small outside kitchen adjacent to the carriage house in back. It was their pleasure to provide such local fresh delicacies as oysters on the half shell and steamed shrimp, both cooled from the fish market. The Jennings parents considered the young Harris couple as chaperones.

Edwin took John out back so they could chat and stay out of the ladies' way.

"I picked up a couple of pale ales from our small brewery on the way home," he stated, while offering one to John. "No ice, of course, but you Brits like it that way. Let's sit for a spell," as he motioned him over to a yard chair.

"All right, old boy, you're a pretty observant guy, but thought I'd give a couple of tips, useful as you progress at the law firm."

"I'll take them," said John.

"The militias and the gentlemen's clubs are quite popular in Savannah, having a number of men you'd like for clients. There are others groups too, but those are at the top of the list. I'm certain you'll be seeking church membership too."

"Much obliged," responded John, "don't ever hesitate to advise me."

"Now, Mr. experienced married man, I need advice of my own. Happy, successful marriage

counsel," Edwin solicited.

"Yes, I'm all of three years experienced," he chortled, "I don't have all the answers, but I can give you a few." He thought, then contributed, "Work to keep her happy, because if she's happy, you're happy. Don't criticize, make diplomatic suggestions." He thought more. "Don't try to control all the money, let her spend a little on what's important to her, no matter how unnecessary it seems to you. And compliment. Little things. There you have it."

"Do you do all that?" asked Edwin, looking overwhelmed, as if the river had just flooded his yard.

Smiling, John said, "I try," then covered his face with his hand. That made Edwin burst out laughing.

After supper, the men returned to the back yard for seegars. Edwin was not a regular smoker or even a chewer of tobacco, but he wanted to be an accommodating host. Harris plucked two from his pocket and tendered one to Edwin.

"Where'd you find these?" he asked, lighting both from a small fire they'd started.

"Bought them from a peddler on the boat coming over. Said they were from the largest and most beautiful island of the Antilles...Cuba. I don't know, he may be a huckster, but I bought several anyway. They're quite satisfying. Now, wife Olivia won't let them be smoked in the house.

And if I'm feeling amorous, I'd best brush my teeth afterwards thoroughly with toothpowder and Glycerin.

"Susannah's the same. Can't say I blame her," Edwin responded, with a grin and a puff. "By the way, what's the law firm found for you to wade through?"

"Just mostly routine, but enjoyable work, such as incorporations, wills, trusts and an occasional boundary dispute that need resolving."

"No large lawsuits or criminal defenses?"

"Not yet, but they'll be coming when the firm thinks I'm ready. I do attend court sometimes just to observe. I plan to be ready. "

"Curious, John, I know you could have gone with a firm in London or Liverpool. What made you decide to emigrate here?"

"Well, though English-bred, I've always been intrigued by world history, politics and successful economies. In comparison, Great Britain always seems to be spending so much time at war with somebody. Virtually all of Europe has monarchies or dictators. And there is too much connection between the church and state everywhere. All of this has just been unappealing to me."

"I want the freedom, opportunity and the democratic society that America has gained. With the continued emigration here, especially of many enterprising Europeans, I see only big economic growth. It's spurred by the freedoms granted here and by so much available land."

"Well-said, John. I agree wholeheartedly and I also see a successful attorney on the horizon."

"I appreciate it, Edwin. Interestingly enough, most of your influential patriots and soldiers these last fifty years came from English families."

Spellbound

Savannah ladies have a natural loveliness and grace, an ease of manner and self-possession, soft and gentle ways. And the gentlemen! They are so courteous and genteel in their bearing, so deferential to ladies.

Early 19th century
visitor from NY

Edwin was still ecstatic that Susannah had returned from Pendleton. One afternoon, he had secured a horse and carriage so to spend some more time alone with her.

Tying the reins to the iron post at the Jennings home, he wasted no time dashing up the front steps. Just as he reached the porch the front door flung open and there stood the love of his life smiling with out-stretched arms. As they embraced, they heard her mother exclaim.

"Not in front of all the neighbors ! Stop that display of affection in front of the entire town ! Come inside !"

"Oh, Mama, calm down! There are no prying eyes on the street this morning."

Edwin, though now feeling awkward, still felt motivated to ask Mrs. Jennings' permission to take Susannah to ride to reacquaint her with the city.

"All right, just stay within the town's boundaries. No rides in the country alone, we can't have tongues wagging about you two," said as she

smiled.

The horse began a slow gait west down the sandy street, soon turning from York Street north onto Bull Street at Wright Square. A few blocks more and they reached Johnson Square in the midst of new construction with clean-ups still ongoing. Susannah was stunned.

"Oh, Edwin, in Pendleton I had almost erased from my mind the destruction from the fire. Returning to my beloved city, I again mourn for those who lost their homes and for those stricken by the Fever."

Tears welled up in her eyes as they continued to survey the changes.

"Sweet Susannah, that's one of the things I love most about you, your tender heart. But don't despair, Savannah will come back stronger and more beautiful than before and we and our children will be part of it all. You know I've fallen under your spell. I can't wait till our wedding in December."

"I hope the next three months go by fast, but Mama says we need the time to plan the wedding and reception."

Edwin continued, "I'm captivated with Savannah too. Its bluff, the river, the squares, the trees with garlands of moss, the grand church edifices. The great port city of commerce, the beautiful houses, its benevolent founding and side waterways like South Carolina. It has so much to offer."

I know business has been a boom for several years, but has slowed since last year. Savannah

banks have offered easy credit and with the oversupply of cotton and India competition, the cotton price has dropped. Defaults and bankruptcies, I know, are occurring. But really good times will return. History proves that business often operates in cycles. I want to be involved when that happens. Stop me if I ramble too much."

Changing the subject, Susannah asked about his activities while she was gone.

"Well, trying to become accustomed to our new home. Seeing if it has any needs, chopping my own wood and obtaining my own water from the nearby square's well. Going to Town Council meetings to become aware of activities.

Investigations have slowed, so I've been more relaxed, but I try to help the Sheriff as needed. I'm looking forward to you and your mother visiting so to offer advice and add a female touch to the meager decor and furnishings."

I did pass by a church-type tent service downtown one evening while you were gone and inquired from someone outside. He said it was part of the Great Awakening, a spiritual revival that is sweeping America. Apparently Baptist and Methodist churches are growing since the Constitution now provides freedom of religion. I considered going in but for the preacher's loud emotional sermon and multiple congregational responses, to which I'm unaccustomed."

"I can understand that," she said. "It would be awkward for me too. But I love my Presbyterian Church."

"I enjoy attending First Baptist of Savannah and the Independent Presbyterian Church with you," he said, "I could become a member at either. By the way, my time at Cambridge and in London influenced me in a way I never would have imagined. England abounds with abolitionists. Parliament subsidizes their provinces' planters, especially in the West Indies, with English taxes. But they're now considering paying planters to abolish slavery. Protestants have been a big influence on the nation. They influenced me also."

He recounted, " I think Parliament will outlaw it in a few years, then probably stop subsidizing the planters. It's heretical to verbalize this in the South, but I'm discussing it only with you. I believe a time of reckoning is going to come. I hope it doesn't culminate in a breach in the country. That could lead to war."

"Tell me about life in Pendleton after I left from the visit."

"Mama and I visited a few of the outlying plantations and were hosted by the owners. Friends even came to town so to take us back in their carriages. I love the openness of their land and pastures with all the cattle, horses and big gardens. Riding horses was something experienced and it was fun. I was able to reconnect with some of the girls I knew growing up, some married..... and some hoping," she said as she glanced at him and smiled.

Edwin then talked again of becoming a cotton factor and of selling the family plantation at

Santee instead of returning to manage it.

"I'll be discussing it with Mama and brother Thomas. Convincing them, diplomatically, I realize, would need to be done. Thought if we do sell Santee, there are two families I would free, as the men are skilled carpenters and could support their families, as do the Freedmen in Savannah. I would need to help them get settled, give them credentials and possibly a small sum to help them start."

"Sounds good to me," Susannah attested.

"As you know, completing my last 2 years of education at South Carolina College in Columbia is appealing. Then my brother and I could have our own factors firm here, as he'll be finishing in a few years."

"One more thing. Your Uncle Jack Jennings' name has come up in the midst of my arson investigations. I think it's possible he was to some degree complicit, early on. The fire starters, I believe, were old seafaring friends. But I don't know if he was aware of their plans. I'm cautious in bringing his name forth. In the name of doubt and with consideration of your family, I probably won't."

Susannah sat wide-eyed and said nothing. She had suspicions of her own. She also had other thoughts. *Edwin is such an interesting conversationalist. Maybe he should study law. But I know the ability to converse is also important in the business world.*

"Now, I have something special for you." He

reached into his pocket and pulled out a small case. Inside was a small gold chain and locket. He took it from the case for her to see.

"My darling, this is for you."

Susannah blushed and for a few moments was without words.

"Oh, it's beautiful !" she exclaimed. "Ohh, please place it around my neck right now !"

He did, letting his fingers linger as he fastened the clasp.

"I love it. Thank you," she vocalized as she looked deeply into his eyes.

"It was my mother's, but she sent it to me for you. We thought you'd like it."

Susannah hugged him as tightly as she could, but briefly, as they were in public.

Edwin knew that convention would not allow him to present her with a large or very expensive gift. This was small, but it was a family treasure.

XXVIII

Barn Burning

Fire represents a form of control for Abner in a world that has allowed him little control over his circumstances.

William Faulkner
"Barn Burning"

The Rook bird. It's a member of the Raven family of birds, widely known in Great Britain. It's sociable, rurally populated, with multiple nests all crammed close together in trees. Hence, the term *rookery*, places where birds of a feather flock together.

Rookeries became slang for crammed tenement slum areas in London, the largest city in 19th century Europe, grossly overpopulated for its facilities. The Rookery Bermondsey slums were in the center of London with poor sanitation, dirt, squalor, unpainted buildings and poverty. All of which invoked crime, with everyone trying to survive.

Rudd Bailey, who had tried to burn Edwin's home in Savannah in retaliation for an arrest back in England, grew up in the Bermondsey. A world enveloped in stealing, fighting, vengefulness and instability of minds.

It contained young men who were uneducated and only sociable in gangs. They became venomous, as a Georgia Diamondback Rattlesnake that lives underground and wants nothing in its way when emerging.

Edwin never forgot the overwhelming police work, necessary and ongoing, with little hope for betterments. A lot about life was learned from the underbelly of London. He admitted *cutting his teeth* as a greenhorn in law enforcement while patrolling the Rookeries. One year was enough, he concluded. So, he came home and put it behind him, except for the valuable lessons learned in arson investigations.

It was a relaxed early morning in the Sheriff's office. Sheriff D'Lyon talked of his woodworking trade and Deputy Shed talked of days on the Ogeechee River. Edwin was giving some thoughts to his upcoming wedding in December.

The Sheriff commented, "Well, Edwin, finally solved the big arson case. Guess you have plenty of time to buss your sweetheart, when mama's not around, eh?"

"*Gentlemen don't talk*, Sheriff, you know that."

"You're dead on, Edwin, 'skuse me," spoken as he spat tobacco juice toward the cuspidor.

"But, I have had time to think over investigative events of this year since I arrived in Savannah. I'll have to say they've been the spurs of my existence."

"Say what?" Shed spoke, with a look of puzzlement on his face."

"They've been the motivating factors for me, which I've enjoyed, though there have been some hapless moments."

All of a sudden, they heard a rider pull up

outside, dismount and open the door in a rush, seeming to be in a frenzy. It was the owner of Hermitage plantation.

"Good morning, Mr. McAlpin. What good wind brings you here in such a hurry?" greeted the Sheriff.

Agitated, he said, "Sheriff, someone set fire to my big barn last night and we have been up for hours trying to douse it, with no luck. I need your arson investigator Edwin to come and seek out this vile creature." He was intense and angry, almost vibrating.

Hearing his impassioned tale, Edwin, unbidden, thought of the planter's indentured servant, Rudd Bailey, who tried to burn his own home.

"I'll be happy to ride out to your plantation this morning. The fact that the burning just happened may help to discover the arsonist quicker. No feelings that it was accidental?"

"Very doubtful," responded McAlpin, "there was nothing in the barn to cause it. Also, whoever set the fire turned the horses out first in some type of twisted benevolent act. I'm glad he did." McAlpin was known to love horses, having a big stable-full.

"Is it okay to bring my betrothed, Susannah? I'm certain she would love to visit your plantation and meet your wife. I think we can easily be there before mid-day."

"Of course. Ellen would love to see her. In fact, she'll want you to partake of a meal with us. She's my new wife, as my first has passed." McAlpin

produced a small smile and appeared to be less rattled than when he arrived. Knowing that investigator help was available had settled his mind.

Promptly hiring a horse and open carriage, Edwin descended on Susannah's home. She jumped at the chance to ride out with Edwin and have a nice visit with Mrs. McAlpin, while he investigated. She had heard that Mr. McAlpin's relatively new wife was about her own age.

The three mile morning carriage trek was serene, with dappled sunshine, as Indian summer was lingering into October. It presented warm days, cool nights, hardwood leaves colorful and falling, and a slight crispness in the air. On arriving, Edwin reined in and the McAlpins came out to greet them. Ellen McAlpin cheerfully latched onto Susannah and began to tour her around the house and yard.

The men walked out back behind the house and Edwin was met with a familiar scene. Squinting in the sun's glare, he ran his eyes over the burned barn, or what was left of it. The sight and smell was reminiscent of the town's aftermath nine months earlier. Charred wood was abundant and smoke was still rising. It would be difficult to pick up any of the hot remnants. He first ambled around, surveying generally. *Observe, Edwin, observe.*

McAlpin soon lapsed into his lament at the loss and then of his anger, especially of the varmint, as he phrased it, that caused it. Edwin began to pose

a series of questions.

"Any storm or lightning during the night?" No was the answer.

"Does anyone here have access to booze?" No again.

"Are flammables kept in the barn?" No repeated.

"What time do lamplights go out in the bunkhouse?"

"About 10."

"Did you notice any lit afterwards?" No restated.

"Did anyone not help to attempt to put the fire out?"

A shake of the head was the response.

"So, you are convinced it was arson?"

"Yes," said the planter.

Edwin placed gloves on his hands, then proceeded to pursue a detailed search of the remains. He considered, as usual, that the *clues are in the ashes*. He soon perceived that flint and steel strikers in a tinderbox with a small amount of linen could have been the starter. He picked up and smelled various pieces of hay that remained. Even with the blackened wood aroma, he could smell turpentine in hay in several places. *Very flammable and with hay the accelerant that really caused big flames. Arson, no doubt.*

Reporting his findings to McAlpin, he inquired if he had a small turpentine still operating there.

"Yes, we prepare it from pine resin and use it for lamps and for cuts and bruises."

"Does anyone have access?"

"All," came the response. "We keep it in a shed about fifty yards further out."

Edwin stated, "It time to find the arsonist, who, in all likelihood, is one of your workers."

"Question. Are any of your hands more troublesome than others?"

"Rudd Bailey, my indentured servant. He dislikes extra tasks, squawks a lot, does not have a good attitude, is surly, provokes fights with others. Has threatened me with running away. I, on the other hand, have threatened him with a whipping. He has become the bane of my operations. A trifle more of that man and I should explode. I have even thought of releasing him from his indenture."

"I assure you, I understand your feelings, as I have had some personal encounters with Bailey myself. If you can tell me the location of his bed and trunk area in the bunkhouse, I'd like to poke around for clues."

"I believe it's the last one on the right after you go inside," said McAlpin.

Upon his reappearance, he advised nothing to be found.

"I did speak to one of your workers who was sickly and had taken to bed for the rest of the day."

" Yes, that would be Aaron, as he has a stomach ailment."

" Upon my casual questioning to him about Rudd Bailey, he remarked hearing him say on

several occasions that he was going *to git him*, meaning you, Mr. McAlpin. Aaron said he took it to be one of Bailey's regular complaints, but didn't take him seriously."

Edwin scanned around, thinking of the next move.

"Mr. McAlpin, I believe it's time we examined all your workers, so we can nose out a firebug. And I do mean nose out. I believe we know who the scoundrel is and since the fire just happened, he should have the smell of turpentine still upon him. Call all of your hands to the house.

We'll divide them into two lines, one for each of us. We can seek turpentine's odor on everyone, as the arsonist may have spilled some. It should be strong, even with the smell of dirt, sweat and smoke on their presence. You and I can then converse aside."

The process of examining fifty-odd workers took about twenty minutes.

Afterward, Edwin asked, "What did you determine, Mr. McAlpin?"

"Just as we suspected, Bailey has the strong smell of turpentine on his hands."

"Good, because I deducted nothing from my group," responded Edwin.

McAlpin then dismissed the group to return to their work at the kilns and the fields, except for Bailey. Whereupon, Edwin called him over and addressed him.

"Rudd, proof of turpentine, which was used to

start the fire, is strong on your hands. I know that you're unhappy with your position, but why did you burn the barn?" Bailey didn't respond, looking away as if he was about to travel to some foreign country.

"I'm going to arrest you for the arson, based on the evidence. Turn around so I can bind your hands."

Turning his back to Edwin, then looking around, snarling like a cornered animal, he retorted, "You'll regret this, Willingham." He then took off on a run, surprisingly heading towards the house and entering it through the back porch.

Startled at first, Edwin sought to follow. Bailey then reappeared with the two women, holding Susannah by the arm with a large kitchen knife poised at her throat.

Edwin swallowed hard. "If you touch her with that blade, I'll kill you!" He shouted. His stomach churned as he pulled his pistol out. Susannah was too scared to speak.

Bailey conveyed his own orders, "Then have a saddled horse brought around along with a blanket and a packet of food and do it now!"

"You won't get far," shouted Edwin.

"I'll take care of his wants right now," shouted McAlpin.

But, the resourceful young Ellen McAlpin, his wife, standing to the rear of Bailey, slammed her heavy iron skillet onto Bailey's head. He faltered, releasing Susannah. Then, he felt the skillet conk again to the back of his head. He staggered from

the porch, dropping the knife.

Rushing to him like a panther, Edwin made a solid kick to the abdomen, followed by a hard right to the head. Bailey hit the ground with Edwin jumping on his back, calling for rope.

"Bailey, the stocks would be too good for you now. You are under arrest for the barn burning and you will serve quite a bit of time in the state penitentiary."

Leaving him in the dirt, he felt a tremendous sense of anger and wanted to pummel him more. Standing there, he beat one fist into the other hand several times. It kept him from beating Bailey. Thus, he enlisted McAlpin to take charge and ride him on the back of a wagon to the Sheriff after they had dinner.

"Try not to shoot him on the way," were his follow-up words.

He wanted to console Susannah and then enjoy the mid-day meal before returning. They went inside, leaving one of the trusted workers to oversee Bailey. He held Susannah in his arms as long as she would let him.

"I am so sorry, darlin', this was supposed to be a nice outing for you today."

"Well," she said, smiling and composed, "I'm still alive and we can thank Ellen for her handiwork. I believe the Sheriff's staff could use her."

That brought forth a few much needed laughs from everyone.

McAlpin said, "Ya'll remind me often to treat

my wife well, as she has a weapon and knows how to use it," he bespoke, with a wave of his head in her direction.

That also elicited a few laughs from everyone. After a delightful meal, Edwin and Susannah thanked them for the hospitality before taking their leave.

"Please come back again," pleaded Ellen McAlpin. "No investigations the next time, I promise," she said, smiling.

"We will, and we'll also send you a wedding reception invitation. It's coming up very soon," expressed Susannah.

"And I want to help with the new barn raising, when it's time," spoke Edwin.

Outside, he hugged Susannah again and helped her climb onto the carriage, conveying looks of love.

"The homeward trek will be nice. You can relax."

During the ride, little was said for awhile. Then Edwin spoke up, "If that Bailey had the sense of a mouse, he would have left well enough alone." He reached over, giving her a consoling pat.

Susannah was fidgeting with her necklace, then she began to cry. For Edwin, that was terrifying. He'd never seen her truly cry. She continued for at least a mile into the trip, Edwin handing her his handkerchief, not knowing what to say. Then her feelings came spewing out, like fire consuming a forest.

"Why did you take me there, as you knew

something like this could happen?! Your work is so dangerous and I can't wait till you quit! It was awful! I've never had to face something so scary in my life! I never want to go on an investigation again, even if I'm only nearby, like inside!" Her crying continued.

"I'm very sorry, from the bottom of my heart, I'm sorry. This may be my last investigation anyway. You are my beloved and I always want to protect you."

"Thank you," she whimpered, then moved over and lay her head on his shoulder. Of course, as they entered town, she would move back.

Edwin wondered what she would tell her parents and if they would call off the wedding. *This is worse than anticipating a big arrest situation. I'll give her a few days before calling again. She needs to settle down. That'll be hard enough with all the wedding planning about. Especially with her Mama scurrying around like a house afire. My heart is uneasy.*

After taking her home, bestowing a kiss and conveying he'd wait a day or two to let her deal with wedding plans, as he termed it, he rode to return the horse and carriage.

His thoughts then returned to the investigation. *This world has some strange goings on at times. Rudd Bailey is like a member of a primordial tribal clan, who must avenge the killing of one of its own. The survival of the fittest, at all costs. That's his world. In America, he's but a wayfaring stranger, with ought friends. I feel both a sorrow*

for him but also a strong wish to see him locked away for a long time. From whence he came, he knows no other way of life.

XXIX

Enlightenment

*Savannah is, and ever will be, a Place of Opulence, so long
as human Nature will require Food and Raiment or
Commerce spread her Canvas to the Wind.*

*John Pope
Virginia visitor
1791*

October was a big export month for cotton, so the wharves were busy, though Yellow Jacket had not completely subsided. Over 250 deaths had taken place, the most in any month so far.

However, Edwin needed life and business advice for his possible future in Savannah. So he set out to meet with Andrew Low at a newly built popular coffee house on Bay Street.

While walking, he reflected on experience garnered while in Savannah. *I need to be more cautious, especially in my vocation. Often, while investigating, it's best to have a friend along when spending time in unique circumstances, such as at the Seaman's Inn, where I was kidnapped....Bay Street in the early evening, when ruffians could congregate...when an arrest is to be made...a nighttime stakeout....all scenes that led to provocations....have heard it said there are no failures in life, only lessons.....I'll ponder that.*

Low's Scottish brogue, reflecting his homeland, was an interesting treat for Edwin.

"Goo-da morning !" greeted Low.

He's friendly, dignified and formal, thought Edwin.

"Same to you, Mr. Low, and thank you for meeting with me. Let's have some coffee to awaken us for the day," said as he signaled the waiter. He first inquired of Low's temporary quarters, knowing the fire consumed his building and all of his belongings.

"It's braw.* I've rented a building called the Brick House close by and am now stocking it and starting to sell again. Me future plans include either constructing a new building with a yaad for lumber, unless what I need becomes available. I'm nae married, have nae children. So my anticipation is that my nephew, also Andrew Low, in Scotland, will join me in a few years. I hope to have grand facilities affta he comes her to wurk with me. It's bean cruaidh** , but I'll get through it."

"Mr. Low, I need advice. The future of Savannah, my own future, along with Susannah's. I have an opportunity at a family plantation in South Carolina as a good option. But I'm so fond of Savannah and the factor business fascinates me. The port, the growth, the cotton."

Low weighed in, "Savannah has a great future. It may be slowere noo, but, worldwide there's still a big demand for cot-ton. We do have competition. But neither of our banks have failed, which is a braw indicator. A robust economy will return. It may take a few years, but there's no substitute for cot-ton with moderate pricing in the world."

*Scottish-good **Scottish-hard

He continued. "What we really need is a canal joining thuh Ogeechee River paralleling our river from the south. It'd make it easier for plantations to the south, like Wild Heron, one of our oldest, to transport products to market. In years to come, we'll want a railroad. It's less hazardous transportation for cot-ton to travel from distant plantations than by boat. "

"Also, using the railroad to ship north to factories would be faster and less costly than by steamship. Plus it'll be a boon to travleers. It will change everything and create a big, new industry." He paused between sips of coffee.

"With the Louisiana Territory now open, there'll be increased European immigration and more westward movement of people. We'll want to serve and profit from a growing nation. It'll be a skoosh."

Edwin listened intently. With ebullience rising inside, he wanted to impress with his own knowledge of current events. Sipping from his coffee cup, he began.

" You know, it doesn't seem that our capital being moved to Milledgeville thirteen years ago has hurt us, based on our port business. Now I hear that even more expansion is due too, as next year we are to acquire Florida from treaties signed by Spain. And I understand that Napoleon has been deposed and exiled to the Island of Elba. The biggest news of which I'm aware is that after four hundred years, Greece's war for independence from the Ottoman Turks and Turkey is coming

soon and has our support."

Low offered, "Weel, I see yer stay abreast of the news."

Edwin smiled and spoke, "Back to Savannah, do we have many unpaid property tax sales that are affecting business?"

Low viewed toward the ceiling, in deep thought. "Yes, sad for some and opportunities for others."

"What's your general opinion on our Sunday laws and alcohol sales, sometimes so hotly debated?"

"Well," Low replied, "'tis an oft thrashed about subject. Oglethorpe and the Trustees originally decreed nae rum, nae slaves and nae lawyers. An interesting trio. Nae Catholics also, due to our contentions with the Spaniards, who are primarily Catholic. All those rules are now abating, so you can probably discern there the locals' feelings. It'll always be thrashed out, sometimes in harsh tones."

Feeling enlightened and refreshed, Edwin thanked Low and advised he looked forward to future conversations. *An undaunted gentleman, if I've ever met one. That's why he's been so successful. A ready friend indeed, who loves business. I'll set great store by him.*

Hostages On President Street

No, a merry life and a short one, shall be my motto.

"A General History of Pyrates"

Daniel Defoe

1725

It was mid-November. Christmas was anticipated, a wedding was looming in the future and Edwin was looking forward to both. It was his last day on the job. Sheriff D'Lyon and Deputy Johnson greeted him good-naturedly as he entered the office. He was glad to be there but equally glad to be finishing up his position.

"Boys, I'm just gonna prop my feet up, relax and maybe take a nap. That's this mornin'. S'afternoon, I'm liable to do the same." His face was aglow.

"In between, we're taking you to dinner downtown. You can order whatever you want," said the Sheriff. "If a man has decided to be shackled for the rest of his life, he deserves one last generous meal among friends." That produced high-spirited laughter from him and Deputy Shed. Edwin, acceptingly, joined in the mirth.

With their words barely spoken, the door flew open as a recognizable young employee of the State and Planters Bank rushed in, slamming the door. He was harried, bearing a look of desperation.

"Sheriff, you've got to come now.

Mr. Thomas Baker, the vice-president of our bank....." Breathing hard, he continued..... " His wife and two children have been taken hostage at their home on President Street. Two men are demanding \$10,000* from the bank as ransom or they're threatening to kill his family !" He recited, still almost breathless.

"How are they armed?" asked the Sheriff, grimaced.

"They have numerous pistols. Mr. Baker is frantic and afraid of his bank not providing the ransom money."

"I've had little experience dealing with hostages." He turned to Edwin, "Have you?"

"Only by observation with the police in London. There are only two ways, negotiation or force."

"Well, we'll need you," retorted the Sheriff. "Tell-um at the bank we're headed there now to do what we can."

Stunned for a few moments, Edwin groaned, "But it's my last day!"

"Yes, I know, but you're still on the payroll, and I need you !" Spoken strongly while cutting a quid of tobacco from his pouch and popping it into his mouth.

"My very last day," Edwin lamented, looking downcast. Resignedly, he spoke, "All right, I'm ready, let's become armed," he said, rising up from his nap position.

Everyone departed the office at a fast pace, reaching the Baker home on President in about ten

* 2021 equivalent : \$500,000

minutes. It was just enough time passing for their thoughts to be spinning, trying to think it through.

"They could be more pyrates, up from Fernandinny, Fladuh, and possibly rum-soaked. We'll catch on to-it in nothin' flat," said Deputy Shed, determined as always.

Edwin mulled it over..... *more thoughtless greedy reprobates.....they're like vicious Harpy Eagles, waiting for their next attack, even on humans....it's going to take all our wits to handle this situation. And my last day at work to boot.....*

Inside the house, three souls sat trembling as their captors helped themselves to food, drank from visible wine decanters and broke chinaware as they stumbled about. Holding their barkers on the family in turn, they laughed and talked of where they would spend the ransom. Afraid of the raucous rascals, the children were whimpering.

Mrs. Baker, the banker's wife, was experiencing a gamut of emotions. Shock, fear, disorientation and helplessness were all manifested, along with pleadings and tears. She was terrified for the children. Her husband outside across the street felt the same, waiting for the law to come intervene. Churning on the inside, he fought the urge to rush the house, knowing he could cause problems. He could be shot. He also knew his own limitations. It was debilitating for him, being aware of an uncertain outcome. He was red-faced and glaring.

At the bank, the directors gathered together, heatedly debating if and when to allow \$10,000 to be taken from the bank's coffers. The president

himself was torn between protecting the Bakers and draining the vault. There was no insurance for ransom funds paid.

"It could ruin us," he stated, with an anguished shake of his head. "Let's wait and see what the law can do."

Meanwhile, the villains were reveling in their control over the circumstances.

"Betcha the bankers will leave the bacon on the porch by noontime," said one, a sign of smugness on his face.

"They better," said the other, "if they don't wanna see blood." He was unswerving in manner.

"Hello the house!" shouted the Sheriff, upon arriving, "Step out so we can see you ! Announce your intentions !"

A gravelly voice responded back through a cracked door. "Naw, Sheriff, we may be rough, but we ain't stupid enough to allow you a shot! You know by now what we want and what will happen if we don't get it!"

"If any harm comes to those inside, you'll be apprehended swiftly!" The Sheriff yelled back.

"Ah, but you won't let anything happen, Sheriff. Just see that we get the cheese. We'll walk them down to our sloop, turn them loose and we'll be gone. Fast as an ocean riptide."

"Mrs. Baker, are you and the kids all right?!" called the Sheriff.

A captor loudly replied, "They're safe, but time is running out !"

By now, a crowd of anxious onlookers had

gathered. Constables did their best to keep them at bay, out of harm's way. Mary Telfair and friends had gathered, as they were out for a morning stroll when they stumbled upon the scene.

When told of the homeowners plight, she blurted out, wide-eyed, "Saints preserve us!" The crowd responded in like manner.

The Sheriff thought, *They're undoubtedly an untidy pair, left over from pyratrical ways in Florida and along the Spanish Main, never having saved a coin, always on the move, as ravenous panthers. With no thought for the morrow, living hand to mouth. Civilization to them is just another arena to grasp the trappings earned by the honorable.*

Edwin focused on the house, thinking....*A Federal townhouse, built around 1800. Two story, high-pitched roof, multi-paned windows, with a covered porch centered in front, rising above a raised basement. A beauty.*

Soon, returning his diverted mind to the situation at hand, he thought, *it has to have another access, seldom-used.*

He turned and pointedly asked the banker, "does your home have ready access to the basement from the outside?"

The response came in quivering speech, "Yes, one below the front porch, but they'd see you if you tried to access. The other is on the side, with two adjacent trap-type doors that are pulled up to open to the basement. They are locked, but I have here the key."

Edwin turned to the Sheriff, "I don't believe negotiating with them will work, as they're too unsound and senseless with regard to human life, including their own. So far, they haven't heard from me or centered on me. If Shed could distract them, I could enter the basement from the side. Then do my best to enter the house from below and overcome them, without harm to the Baker family."

"Do it," responded the Sheriff. "I'll be ready to back you up."

"Shoot, y'all, I'm a good distracta," Deputy Shed allowed, with one shake of his head and a grin to boot. He was ready for action.

"Okay Shed, then get as near the front as you can without becoming a target. Challenge one to come out and fight like a man. Call him a yellow-belly or such. That'll rattle a hostage-taker and throw him off, so to speak. If you can entice him onto the porch, even better. I can accost the one inside. I'm headed now to the side basement access."

"Aw-ite," acknowledged Shed.

With stout determination and a measure of level-headedness, Edwin moved to the side, key in hand for the basement lock. All thoughts of this being *his last day at work* had evaporated for the moment. Unlocking and then drawing up one door with silence, he stepped downward.

The darkened area lit up from the light now poring in. A brick floor, with a cooler temperature ideal for container food storage, ushered him

inside. A harmless Hognose snake slithered across in front of him, causing him to jump back.

Taking a few steps, he could just make out the stairs across the room. They led to the living quarters above, seen from a sliver of light between door and frame. Moving at a deft pace across the wide room, he crept in the direction of the stairs. Fearing them creaking, he ascended with adroitness. At the top, he cracked the door just enough to see and hear. The bellowing of Shed and one of the bandits back and forth could be heard. The varmint had opened the porch front door slightly so to strongly convey his crusty voice.

Shed fomented the villain's anger as much as possible.

"Come out, you yellow-belly and let me see you! Or are you afraid to take me on without yer pistol?"

The captor's violent mood escalated such that he grabbed Mrs. Baker and forced her onto the porch as a shield.

"You see my gun to her head!? You are powerless as long as I hold the hostages. Come closer and I'll blow your own head off!" Power-crazy and belligerent, he made the crowd shudder, some becoming tearful.

Mrs. Baker's eyes grew large with panic and her heart was pounding. She was petrified. Her husband, confounded, had to be held back and told of Edwin's maneuvers. Shed continued to chide the captor and upbraid his masculinity. The other

scoundrel stood at the front window peering out.

Seizing the opportunity, Edwin opened the main floor's basement door and crossed into the parlor. With a single finger to his mouth, he signaled the children to keep quiet. Creeping up behind the pyrate in the house, he placed a strong hand around his mouth and a gun to his head. He forced the bhoy to drop his pistol.

Then, he motioned the children to go to the basement. Leading the captor there also, he asked the young boy for rope. He finally noticed it was young Charles, whom he'd met at the gala. Next, the blackheart was bound and tied to a post and gagged.

Thanking Charles, he quietly told them, "Go outside the basement door and go across the street to your Papa. But don't let them see you from the porch. I'm going to help your Mama."

Now came the more challenging moves. He slipped onto the front porch, which alerted the other miscreant, who yelled "Stop!"

At the same time, Deputy Shed charged onto the porch, barker in hand. The offender turned and shot him in the leg, causing him to fall and howl in pain.

Edwin pulled Mrs. Baker aside, grabbed the offender's pistol hand and shot a piece of lead through it. He winced in pain, issued a piercing cry as he fell off the porch onto the sidewalk. The Sheriff was on him like a hawk swooping and grabbing a rabbit, so to secure him.

"I should let you bleed to death, you rascal, but

you need to stay alive to be punished. Now git your sorry carcass off the ground."

Then he called for aid, so that both of the wounded could be attended. Next stop would be Dr. Waring's medical office, then the rascals would sulk in the gaol. As the scene settled down and with the family safely reunited, the Bakers expressed much appreciation to the lawmen.

"Wow, Mr. Willingham, you took care of those guys!" said young Charles Baker.

"And you helped, buddy, so, thank you."

Edwin sat down on the porch and leaned back, amidst small pools of blood. He thought of the round gold rings in their ears and their tarry pigtails, both confirmation of them as ex-pyrates. Closing his eyes, breathing slowly, he was glad it was over. *Maybe this day is a fitting end to my police work*, he thought. *I just hope Susannah didn't know what was going on.*

But she did. She was overwhelmed with relief when she heard how it ended and she thanked God that Edwin's future would be less violent. Shed's wound was tended and he was given a cane and told to rest the leg for a week, so it would heal. The Sheriff was ready for more relaxed evenings of building furniture to sell, which gave him much joy. In fact, he planned to make a lowboy from oak wood as a wedding gift for Edwin and his bride.

River Adventure

*Rivers have what man most respects and longs for in his own
life and thoughts-- a capacity for renewal,
replenishment, energy,
creativity, cleansing.*

J.M. Kaufman

Edwin had experienced quite a few challenging situations in 1820 Savannah, and to a degree, he had enjoyed each one, especially if a good outcome resulted. But he needed a break from blackhearts, steamboat accidents, barn burnings and hostage-takers. He took Cambridge classmate and attorney John Harris to dinner downtown and presented him with a self-inspired challenge.

"Canoeing the Savannah River?" John replied, "What ? Have you ever experienced that? " while looking at Edwin with skepticism.

"No, that's why we need to pursue it. An adventure, all our own, that we've initiated. Most of my challenges this year have come from the hands of others. Now, I want us to bring one about. I need to do it before my wedding, as I could be limited thereafter. Only a five mile paddle from upstream to downtown. A day trip, Indian style. The scenery should be great, with the fall tree colors, especially being so close to the water in a small craft." He was enthusiastic, to say the least.

" Are you thinking of a canoe or a pirogue?"

" Tell you what," Edwin responded, " those terms have become interchangeable and sometimes confusing. But I envision dugout canoes made from cypress trees, which our shipwrights have made downtown. Not big, maybe fifteen to twenty feet long and easy to paddle. We could even take the ladies with us."

"You want to take the ladies with us and you haven't even convinced me ? "Harris admonished, mouth wide open.

"Well, give it some thought. We can chat about it more later. But I know you have a latent adventurous heart."

" Where would we start the float ?"

" McAlpin's Hermitage plantation wharf, northwest of town. I've seen it, easy place to start. It's a big, wide river, no rapids and there shouldn't be any logs to wrestle, " Edwin described. "The water will be cool in late November, so no swimming for us."

" You mean if we don't turn over," commented Harris, still feeling doubtful.

"John, if you can drive a horse and carriage, you can paddle a canoe. To tell you the truth, with current, you can mostly just steer."

" Like you said, let me think it over," he said with a blank face.

" Sounds good," Edwin smilingly retorted with a confident single nod of his head.

The appointed day arrived about a week later.

Harris finally admitted the canoe paddle was a great idea. They couldn't convince Susannah and Olivia to float with them. But they did want to ride out in the wagon with their new bonnets and parasols to the embarkation. Young John, Jr., would go along also, but not to float. Ellen McAlpin was pleased they were coming.

Edwin had to strongly promise Susannah there was no investigation at the plantation planned this time. He also advised they'd have cork and wood cushions that float, in the unlikely event that the men somehow fell in the water.

Trevor, her brother, was kind enough to rent a large enough wagon with seats enough for everyone plus room for laying the canoe in the flatbed. He handily acquired everything before picking up the group. Edwin furnished the funds along with a tip for Trevor. The plan was for him to meet the canoers at Screven's wharf downtown at mid-afternoon for a take-out.

The girls seemed to immerse in the anticipation of fun along with the men. That made Edwin happy. The ride to the plantation on the wagon even added to the adventure. After arriving and speaking to the McAlpins, they all headed to the wharf. Upon arriving, the women observed the river. They wouldn't climb down.

"What's the matter?" Edwin asked. They gave the men serious and frightful expressions.

"It looks too scary," Susannah voiced, Olivia agreeing.

"There's no danger," said Edwin.

" I think we'll go back and visit with Ellen McAlpin and then Trevor can take us back to town. You boys have fun," reported Olivia.

The men gathered their paddles, food basket and water bottles, then loaded all into the canoe.

"Okay, we're going," said Edwin. They kissed the ladies and advised they'd be home for supper. They waved as they launched. Easing into the river and becoming comfortable with the paddles and canoe was their first priority. Then Edwin disclosed facts he'd learned.

"Talked to Caleb, my friend the river pilot, this week. He knows the river backward and forward. Said we could expect some tidal effect and when it moves upstream, can raise the water level several feet. The water and air temperature should be around sixty degrees, so no immersing. There are plantation wharfs along the river on both sides so we could see some activity.

Reminded me to watch for Sturgeons leaping, as they can be really big and can hurt if they slam onto the canoe. Should take us three to five hours to float, depending on stops, our speed of paddling and any tidal flow. He proposed focusing on stability in the canoe, no standing up and no sudden moves, plus not getting too close to tree limbs near the bank."

"Did he say what to do if we accidentally turn over?" John queried.

"We didn't discuss that slender possibility. But were it to happen, I'm certain our natural instincts will take over."

Edwin then smiled and saluted John, posing as if a naval captain.

John gave him a puzzled look for several seconds but said nothing. *Too late to back out now*, he thought, *might as well enjoy it*. He soon commented from the front, his fervor growing.

"Wow, clear blue sky, no wind, solid current, green water, with only a hint of a stain and a dugout easy to paddle. Feels good."

Edwin agreed. "'Tis so quiet, with songbirds the only sound. Heavily wooded on both sides. Lot of hardwood trees, some overhanging the river, moss-draped. I notice some banks are up to ten feet high, while others only about a foot. Some spots have clearings, good for stopping, but most are overgrown, almost jungle-like. The river looks to be 200 to 250 feet across."

The men enjoyed all the pleasures that nature could provide, with eagles, ospreys and other water birds flying over. Alligators and turtles were sunning on logs near the bank, but no snakes about due to cooler weather. They saw huge Cypress trees, their half-submerged trunks along the bank creating bell-like shapes and their needles turned rust red.

Many leaves had fallen but there were still enough to provide some color, mostly brown and tan and on occasion, a red maple. They did see a couple of Sturgeons leaping high into the air and loudly splashing back into the water. Some were big, six to eight feet long.

"You know," said Harris, "we're kind of like

Lewis and Clark, off on a discovery mission."

"I agree," said Willingham." Of course, their mission took two years. Not certain I'd want to be gone that long. They were free spirits, few wives, if any, at home to leave."

Wharf workers waved and hailed them as they floated and a lone fisherman could be seen fishing lazily along the bank. They soon noticed the tide was moving upriver around mid-day, so they stopped at a clearing to enjoy their packed lunch of bread and cheese.

"I estimate we've probably made four miles with about one to go," said Edwin.

"Sounds good to me," answered John, "we'll have to do this more often... and..... somehow talk the ladies into coming with us." At that, Edwin raised his hands high in the air with a glum look, as if to say *-I hope so, but I don't know how.*

After resting, the guys set out again for the final mile. John laid his paddle aside and turned his head around to Edwin.

Smiling and composed, he offered, " I just want you to know how much I've----"

All of a sudden his words were broken by a huge Sturgeon leaping into the air adjacent the canoe front. Sloshing water aside, it sailed up about four feet, then slammed down on Harris causing the canoe to flip when it dropped. Everyone and everything went into the water, including the Sturgeon and floatable cushions.

Harris cried out in pain as he went over, "Owwww!"

Surfacing, Edwin yelled out, "Swim to the bank, I saved my paddle and I'm going to drag the canoe over there ! Can you make it ? "

No word came from Harris, as he languished on his back, trying to stay afloat.

"John, you've got to go to the bank, while I pull the canoe over !"

A muffled reply of *okay* came in return, as Harris swam slowly backwards. Streams of blood broke the surface as he went. Cold water made them both shiver.

Edwin had one hand curled under the dugout, it turned upside down, with the other arm stroking slowly towards a bank clearing. The paddle he had thrown in the same direction, far enough to land on the ground.

This dugout is heavy, it must be 100 to 150 pounds and pulling will take all the muscles I have, which are stiffening in the icy water. He finally reached the bank, pulling ever so much to achieve part of it up on the shore. *It probably weighs at least 200 pounds with water in it,* he now thought.

He lay down, next to Harris, both partly in the water, exhausted. A few minutes later he realized Harris was injured and he must see to him. Standing, he went over to his partner and pulled him further up on shore. His left shoulder was badly bruised from the metal-like fish scales and his left arm was cut, still seeping blood. Removing his own shirt, Edwin wrapped it around the cut arm and pressed. Checking it every few

minutes, he finally had success in stopping the bleeding.

" Wish I had some water for you, but it spilled out, along with everything else. "

" Well, I think I'm going to live," said Harris, "but wow, it does hurt. By the way, I'm suing you when we get back. Inhuman treatment of a friend.....or something like that. "

" Suing *ME* in your first lawsuit in America? Better promise no lawsuit or I'm leaving you here." They both managed some muted laughter, trying to temper the circumstances.

" I'm going to try to bail out the canoe, as it's too heavy to flip over. It may take a while, so just stay where you are."

" Man, where would I go ?" said Harris, effecting a big grin. Thirty minutes later, using leftover muscle, Edwin had it bailed. He helped John over to the canoe, slid it out a little and aided him in laying down in it."

" Now, don't die on me and I'll have you at Screven's Wharf soon. We'll take you to the doc soon as we arrive."

He soon noticed John had dozed off. *Good enough*, he thought. Paddling at a steady pace, as much as his body allowed, he arrived at the landing within the hour.

Trevor Jennings was there as planned and helped pull up the canoe and then place Harris on the wagon. Straight to Dr. Waring's office, his cut was sutured, alcohol-based liquid applied with a bandage and a balm was spread on the very large bruise.

It was then Edwin's time to take him home and face Harris' wife, Olivia. He attempted a brief story as to what happened. Many *so sorrys* were expressed.

"I'll come by tomorrow to check on him," he said. *Hope she'll let me in the house.*

Next, after cleaning up, it was on to Susannah's, where he downplayed the Sturgeon incident and canoe flip. He was somewhat successful, in spite of her numerous questions.

He did admit, "I'll have to say I am...flat worn out."

Sensing his need for nourishment, she prepared a light supper for him. He hoped it was a forgiveness meal, or something of the sort.

"Goodness, what guys do for adventure. I shudder to think if Olivia and I had been along."

Silver-Spurred Roosters

Cock-fighting must be considered a barbarous diversion.

English Judge Edward Law
1811

Cockfighting. Edwin knew it was an ancient spectator and wagering gambol. He'd heard it called a *gentlemen's sport* that had been enjoyed by statesmen like Washington, Jefferson and Franklin. Nobleman and commoner alike attended, though only a few actually trained and handled the fighting gamecocks.

Starting in Asia many years ago and then coursing through Europe, it came to America with the immigrants. He'd witnessed it in England during his tenure and in South Carolina growing up. He admitted liking it, though he couldn't say why.

It's primeval, he thought.....men like to fight and to witness fights...any kind....spontaneous or planned...still.... something inhumane and cruel about it all.

Attending a few at local plantations, where pit fights occurred often, he would see friends, some from Savannah's upper ranks. November's cooler weather seemed to bring them out. He might bet a

nominal amount, purely as entertainment, but some bettors won or lost heavily. It could ruin a man.

He was aware that ladies disliked it, or at least didn't want to hear about it. Horse races they enjoyed, as that was a social event for them with no gruesome bloodletting. Susannah would cringe if she knew he attended. Edwin knew her father didn't go and decided he must stop. Before marriage, by tradition, he was expected to disassociate with any dissipated friends and noxious activities.

He sought to go one more time - the last time before his wedding. He invited Beaufort friend A.C. Baynard to visit and attend with him. The ride to a plantation that late afternoon was a time of reminiscing about growing up in South Carolina. He would also see some friends that knew of his impending marriage, so there could be some friendly verbal jostling in his direction adjacent the cockpit in a large barn.

Men would yell, thinking they were spurring their favorite on, then calling out bets, with some imbibing. The noise at the spectacle could be deafening.

The fights were bloody, as usual, and often would turn closer to the onlookers, scattering them. As the night progressed, with torches burning, two ferocious fowl, each with razor-sharp silver spurs attached suddenly piled over by Edwin. In a split second, in the midst of battle, one sliced him deeply on the arm with the spurs and

blood spurted everywhere. Edwin fell and nearly passed out from pain.

Baynard instantly came to his aid, first wrapping his belt around the cut arm above the wound so to curtail the bleeding. He then removed his own outer shirt to apply to the cut. It quickly soaked with blood, but several minutes of pressure soon slowed the flow. Edwin looked and felt helpless. *Is this my punishment for coming one more time ? I'll never explain it to Susannah.* Pondering that thought made him feel worse.

"We better get you to Doc Waring. Can you ride ?"

"I, I think so."

Lightheadedness set in, followed by nausea. However, he was determined to mount his horse and so set his mind to do so. Taking it slow, he mounted with help and then both rode at a moderate pace to town.

Of course the fowl pit hadn't missed a lick, as they say, nor did the wagering and clamoring stop. It was like a gathering of cavemen, yelling and grunting, casting aside an injured rooster, bringing forth a new challenger for the opponent.

To their advantage, Dr Waring's home and medical office were adjacent. A rap on the door was answered, finding Dr Waring already in his night clothes. He had also slipped on a housecoat.

"Boys, what's going on?"

When told of the cut, he led them on his cane to next door.

Taking a look, he inquired, "Nasty cut, how'd it happen?"

Edwin, now looking pale, related sheepishly, "At a cockfight, too close to the action. T'was to be my last before my upcoming marriage."

The doc chuckled, "We'll fix you. Are you in pain? "

"Yes, sir."

"We'll give you Laudanum pills. That'll relieve it."

He removed the shirt, the belt, cleaned the arm with soap and water and used a razor to remove hairs around the arm.

"Let's sew you up with catgut," he proposed with confidence. I have a small amount of newly developed Morphine, made from opiates in Europe. A good pain-killer, but unless you're in terrific pain, I hesitate to use it, unless I'm performing surgery."

"Sew me doc, I can handle it."

"First, I'm going to swab you with alcohol," remarked Dr. Waring, as he pulled a bottle of whiskey from a cabinet. He uncorked the bottled, poured some onto a pad to which he applied onto the injured arm.

"English Dr. Edward Jenner is the physician credited with the most success in developing the smallpox vaccination. He has also postulated that applying alcohol will possibly prevent sepsis, so I'm trying it on wounded patients." Smiling, he said, "Some of them think I should present it to them in a glass."

Edwin was stoic, trying to be courageous as he received eight sutures, all while lying down. Then,

more alcohol was applied to his arm.

"Just change your bandages every few days. Keep it clean and dry till it heals. Come back in about ten days, and I'll remove the stitches. When is your wedding?"

"Dec. 15th," responded Edwin.

"Great ! You should be fine by then."

After thanking the doc and settling up with him, they headed home.

Edwin commented to A.C, "All these events in my life over the last few months involving combat of some kind, without a scar, now injured as a spectator. Should be a life-lesson to be careful of my hangouts."

Whereupon A.C. roared with laughter and Edwin couldn't help but join in. Then A.C. recounted a youthful venture.

"It's like when we were 13 and got hold of a seegar. We lit it and took turns puffing away, feeling all-fired. We became dizzy and threw up and had to go home and ask our parents to help us. That created quite the scenes." They both snickered at that.

"Don't think I want to be present when you tell Susannah."

Edwin looked at him, gritted his teeth as if biting a bullet and cleared his throat a few times.

"Yeah, she's already aflutter with wedding plans and her mother's attentiveness. I'm trying to stay out of the way. I'll try wearing nothing but long sleeved shirts. 'Course, she'll notice on our wedding night." More laughter came from A.C.

A few weeks later, healing, he had a strong yearning to go to one more cockfight....again. But, collecting his wits, he managed to put it aside. *I know better.*

Nuptials

Don't talk to me until I've had my morning coffee.
age-old marriage advice

One evening, Mrs. Jennings, in the middle of discussing never-ending wedding plans with Susannah, stopped to chat with her husband Thomas.

"Julia Scarborough paid us an unannounced visit today. After her hello hugs and taking a seat, she wanted all the wedding details. She is definitely entertaining though and if you have want of any Savannah social news, she's the one to ask. She graciously offered to host a post wedding trip dinner for Susannah and Edwin."

"Papa, isn't that considerate of her?" asked Susannah.

"It certainly is, especially since I've heard that Mr. Scarborough is experiencing financial problems due to the SS Savannah's ocean-going expenses."

Mrs. Jennings interceded, "Well, she graciously likes to entertain. Bless her heart."

Thomas Jennings nodded his head, trying to appear as a good listener.

A few days before the wedding, Edwin was visiting at the Jennings home when a knock on the front door was heard. Mr. Jennings laid aside his

pipe and arose from his favorite chair near the fireplace.

Opening the door, he was happy to welcome Edwin's family from Beaufort District, South Carolina. Edwin's mother, Sarah, her husband, Elais Jaudon, and several of Edwin's half-sibling brothers and sisters had arrived. Also entering was his younger brother, Thomas Henry Willingham.

"Please come in, come in," Mr. Jennings said, "We've been expecting you."

Introductions were made all around and they enjoyed conversing and becoming acquainted. The crowded parlor was filled with merriment and conversation. Susannah and Edwin exchanged gratified looks, pleased that the families seemed to blend so well.

The entourage was soon led to the dining room to enjoy a festive meal. A few toasts were made to the bride and groom which added to the conviviality.

Mrs. Jennings inquired, "Where are all of you residing while in Savannah?"

Edwin's mother, Sarah, responded. "Elais, Thomas Henry and I will be staying with Edwin. The siblings and the nanny will be at a nearby cottage, provided by one of Edwin's friends."

She continued, "Mrs. Jennings, I do hope that you will advise me if any wedding needs should arise that I may be of service to you."

Mary Jennings replied, "Thank you, I'm grateful for your offer."

Sarah Jaudon then commented, "Now, we must

make haste and settle our family in their quarters and let your household reclaim your lovely home."

The Willinghams and Jaudons said their farewells and exited the Jennings' home. Guided by Edwin, they walked towards Edwin's house.

"Edwin, if you'll provide me with directions," said Mr. Jaudon, "I'll take the younger Jaudons to the cottage you have reserved. This will give you and your mother the opportunity to discuss any wedding decisions that might need attention."

Edwin shared the route and the group parted ways.

Turning to her son after the others had departed, Sarah smiled and said, "Edwin, I am so pleased with the charming girl you have selected to wed. Her family is most suitable and well-established in Savannah, which is so comforting. You and Susannah remind me of the young love that your father and I experienced."

He was surprised to hear her speak of his father because of the sadness associated with his loss. She continued to reminisce about his father, Thomas Henry Willingham, the immigrant, who had died about a year after Edwin's own birth in 1797.

"He was a handsome man, much like you. Coming to America was a big change for him, but he was ambitious and learned, just as you. As I've mentioned in the past, he came in the late 1700's, leaving his family behind in the Lincolnshire area of England. Their ancestral home was there for

almost 300 years, but he never looked back. As you recall, he arrived at Sullivan's Island, South Carolina, near Charleston, as did many, settling there initially."

"So disciplined to succeed, acquiring the Santee plantation and making it successful. He had strong principles and was fair-dealing with everyone. He would have been very proud of you, as am I." She smiled and gave him a motherly hug.

"Thank you, Mama. I appreciate it and I do like hearing about my father."

Andrew Low, who had rather taken Edwin under wing, dropped by his home for a brief visit. He was introduced to Edwin's mother and then proceeded to surprise them.

"Edwin, you're making a name for yourself in Savannah, plus marrying a darling girl and we're all proud. I want to do a little something for you myself. Here's the key to a newly constructed cottage, a retreat on the Isle of Hope, about ten miles east on the Skidaway River. It's owned by a close friend who appreciates all your work here. Take Susannah there for a few days after the wedding. The house is stocked with food and beverages and there is a nearby islander that will be at your disposal, as necessary. Here is a key and a map that you can use. His name and location are on the map."

Edwin was most appreciative, as was his mother, and they invited him to stay and visit.

"Thank you so much, but I've got to get back to

wurk. I look forward to being at the wedding reception, " he said, smiling as he left.

The appointed church wedding day arrived on December fifteenth at Independent Presbyterian Church for mid-morning. It would, as typical, be with only families and a select few in attendance, as A.C. Baynard, Edwin's good friend and Anna Taylor, Susannah's friend.

As was the custom, a multitude of guests were invited to a reception at the bride's parent's home following the church ceremony. A reception invitation example would read as below, without the wedding parties named, as was the tradition. Invitees would know of the event in advance.

*Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Jennings
request the pleasure of your company, on
Friday morning next, reception at eleven.
321 E. York St, Dec. 15th, 1820*

Susannah slowly opened her eyes that mid-December morning, as the sunlight streamed into her bedroom. Sitting up in her canopy bed, she yawned, stretched and gazed around her room. She realized this would be the last morning she would awaken in this cozy chamber.

Her thoughts then leaped forward, as this would be the day she married her handsome and brave Edwin. She was glad that her mother had suggested they wed in the beautiful newly

reconstructed Independent Presbyterian Church. It was becoming more appealing to enter matrimony at one's church instead of at the bride's home.

She had felt somewhat guilty, having so much happiness on the heels of the town's two challenges this year, the fire and the fever. However, friends and family had assured her that it would be a positive diversion and provide a sense of new beginnings for all.

The door opened and Mrs. Jennings appeared, smiling broadly.

"Good morning, our future Mrs. Willingham !"

She had brought a tray of muffins and hot coffee to start the day.

"Time for breakfast," she advised, "as your gown will be delivered soon from the dress maker and we must attend to your appearance before it arrives !"

She then prepared Susannah's wash basin and arranged her brush and hair pins. There was no doubt that excitement was in the air.

Meanwhile, Edwin had arisen the same day well before daylight, eager but not having slept so well. He was exhilarated. Brother Thomas soon came downstairs to join him for early morning coffee.

"Well, older brother, are you ready for your nuptials ?"

"I better be," spoke Edwin. "I am both confident and slightly fearful at the same time. What a combination of emotions. You better be prepared to hold me up at the front of the church

as Susannah walks the aisle."

"That I can do. Just think of it as another investigative assignment, when you are enthused and motivated to proceed. Think of the joy you experience. Then transfer it to today."

"Hmm," said Edwin, "I wouldn't dare mention that to the ladies, but that is a great bit of advice. Thank you. Now, let's have some breakfast and then ascend the stairs to groom up and suit up. I'm certain Mama will want to check us over before we go."

The groom and his family arrived at the church first. They were greeted by Pastor Campbell who would be officiating. Following him into the church they were quite impressed by the sanctuary's beauty. They noted the exquisitely crafted suspended dome and mahogany pulpit.

Edwin and brother Thomas Henry, his best man, wore morning suits with single-breasted coats, striped trousers, waistcoats and ties, along with top hats and gloves.

From a front pew, they listened as the pastor enlightened Edwin of his responsibilities during the ceremony. They then exited to a side waiting room. Next the pastor returned to the entrance to welcome the bride and her family.

Thankful for the sunshine and warm temperature on this December morning, the Jennings household made their way to the church where they were greeted by the Reverend Campbell. The previous day he had visited them

and explained to Susannah what was expected of her during the service.

With the nuptials beginning, the groom and Thomas Henry stationed themselves at the pulpit, awaiting the bride and her family's aisle walk. Edwin caught his breath as he gazed upon his treasure as she came down and stood beside him.

Susannah lifted her eyes from beneath her white silk bonnet which was laden with ribbons and dainty flowers. She trembled slightly under her empire waist gown. The embroidered metal trim was woven throughout.

They are such a handsome couple, thought Mrs. Jennings, as she dabbed tears with her lace handkerchief. Mr. Jennings had mixed feelings knowing he was no longer the one on whom Susannah would depend. However, he was pleased with her choice.

The service continued and all Edwin could think of was how blessed he was to have found the love of his life. His awareness of the moment resonated when he heard the pastor say *I now pronounce you man and wife*. He bent to kiss her and they walked hand in hand out of the church with the families following back to the Jennings home.

Walking along they passed a few of the burned buildings which reminded them of the tragedies of the past year. They also shared together that the fire and investigation was the impetus for their meeting and how they would be a part of the rebuilding.

It was a ten to fifteen minute walk, maybe a little more with a bride and her long dress leading. An assemblage was there to happily greet them at the Jennings home.

It included many of Edwin's new and old acquaintances, as Mayor Thomas and Emily Charlton, Sheriff D'Lyon and wife, and John and Olivia Harris, he with a large bandage under his shirt from the Sturgeon mishap on their canoe adventure. Also attending were the Habershams, Andrew Low, the Scarboroughs, the McAlpins, Mary Telfair, river pilot Caleb Chisholm, Innkeeper Jamie Dale and wife and even Deputy Shed Johnson, dressed in his version of finery.

At the reception, the couple having tirelessly greeted each and every one, Edwin raised his arms and requested the guests to let him tell of their plans.

"We plan to sell my family's Black Creek Plantation at Santee. I'll be involved with that over the coming months with my brother, so we'll be moving there temporarily and will lease our home here."

"I won't be an investigator here anymore, though I've thoroughly enjoyed it. Next summer, we'll move to Columbia, South Carolina, so I can finish my last two years of college. Then, we want to come back to Savannah in 1823 and set up a cotton factorage with my brother Thomas, who plans to relocate here also, upon completing his college."

He continued. "One thing has stood out to

Susannah and myself that I want to share with you. Though destruction has come to Savannah this year, for which I'm so sorry, it was the reason I came here and was able to meet and marry the love of my life." He paused and smiled. "I guess I can say no more."

Whereupon, he thanked all for being there and supporting them." We love you all." With that, he took Susannah's hands in his and asked the quartet to play a waltz for their dance. Everyone applauded.

Finis

EPILOGUE

By the end of 1820, almost 700 Yellow Fever victims had been buried at Old Cemetery (Colonial Park Cemetery) on Abercorn. One-tenth of the population had succumbed.

Although 1820 is prominently termed The Year of the Fever, a total of more than 4,000 Savannahians died as a result of epidemics from 1807 through 1820. Sadly, no cause, vaccine or adequate treatments were known at the time.

The Savannah Poor House and Hospital Society, located south of Liberty Street, housed many of the poorer victims. It eventually merged with Candler Hospital.

Because of the fire, the fever and the Panic of 1819, Savannah entered an economic slide, with many wealthy businessmen faltering. Example: William Scarborough, merchant and planter of Savannah transatlantic steamship fame, saw his fortunes dissipate. He had to sell his beautiful home on West Broad Street, designed by William Jay in Regency style. He and his wife only resided in it one year and then he wound up in prison due to debts. It's ironic, as one reason Georgia was founded was to transport and help those in England's debtor prisons.

In the 1830's, Savannah rebounded and fortunes were once more made with cotton, aka *white gold*, becoming king again. Immigrants continued to land in Savannah, with jobs more plentiful. Most of the adult occupants in 1820, year of the novel, were of the 2nd and 3rd generations following Oglethorpe's group that arrived in 1733.

AUTHOR'S COMMENTS

Savannah is ideal for the setting of a early 19th century historical fiction novel. With its fame as a planned city, featuring squares amidst beautiful trees, outstanding architecture and the Savannah River, it is unique. Many occupants and tourists realize as such, making tourism a prime industry, second only to the port authority operations.

In writing the novel, many historical backdrops were used to capture the tenor of the times. Noticeably, the overriding influence of the tremendous cotton trade in the 19th century is reflected in the fabulous homes and churches constructed. The traumas of the great fire of 1820 and the Yellow Fever epidemic evidenced the challenges of the era.

Not to be ignored was the 1820 riverfront atmosphere, a spectacular display of commerce and mercantilism in daytime, to the reveling of a sub-culture at night. River Street, as we now know it, is now developed as a big tourist attraction. However, until 1833 it did not exist as a public thoroughfare. It was purely a waterfront, with individually owned wharfs abounding. Many were utilized for retail sales, as stores with coffee, tobacco, china and other items.

Watercraft, with supplies, cotton or passengers would dock at specific quays and of course, plantation wagons and upriver ships would unload cotton to be shipped or stored.

Tradition has it that 2 Spaniards were arrested for arson of the 1820 fire, but no records seem to exist for the outcome.

Savannah is special to me personally, as my g-g grandfather, T.H. Willingham, lived there in 1823-1825, as a cotton factor. He later moved to Beaufort District at Lena, South Carolina, where he and his family operated a plantation for fifty years. Many other Willingham relatives had cotton plantations nearby.

My grandmother, Estelle Willingham Whitfield, lived at the still existing Gravel Hill plantation home, built in 1856, in southwest South Carolina. Her family eventually moved to Georgia when she was fifteen. The novel's protagonist, Edwin Willingham, is fictional, though I did pluck the given name from the many Willinghams in the family genealogical book. It covers effectively almost 200 years in America.

Edwin is fictionally my above-mentioned actual g-g-g grandfather T.H. Willingham's older brother in the novel.

Also, my grandfather, Henry C. Duggan, Sr., was a cotton buyer in middle Georgia in the early 1900's. He was the contact man with farmers for factors, agents and shippers in Savannah and often made business trips there.

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There are two in the group who are also writers, plus one an attorney, one a dentist and several with Master's Degrees, so they were all qualified to review my work.

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Historic and charming Savannah, Georgia, is the setting for the actual 1820 fire that burned almost half the town, leaving it charred and dazed. In this historical fiction novel, an arson investigator is hired by the city to seek the cause and the fire starters. Though faced by multiple trials, even a duel, he is determined to succeed. In the midst, he meets a beautiful young lady that captures his heart. Their courtship is a shining light among the challenges.

This novel captures the essence and the culture of probably the world's biggest cotton exporting town of the era. The background consists of the famous squares, magnificent churches, delightful architecture and a bevy of successful Merchant Princes and Cotton Factors.

Henry C. Duggan, III, is also the author of *Silver's Odyssey*, a survival story from the 1622 shipwrecked Atocha silver galleon off the Keys. He thrives on history and the waterways, having canoed over 100 rivers. Home is Albany, Ga., where he is a native, as is his wife, Pat.



Washington Guns, cannons presented to Chatham Artillery Militia, for service in the Revolution.
Bay Street Park, downtown Savannah.

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